



# Session 16: Credit Accumulation and Transfer Systems (CATS)

8<sup>th</sup> November 2023  
Accra-Ghana

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# Outline

Introduction to ACQF Guideline 4: Validation and Recognition of Learning

CATS in the Context of the ACQF

Development and Implementation of CATS at National Level

Group Exercise – Allocation of Credits to a Learning Programme

DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL  
QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)



**GUIDELINE** **04**

Validation and recognition of learning

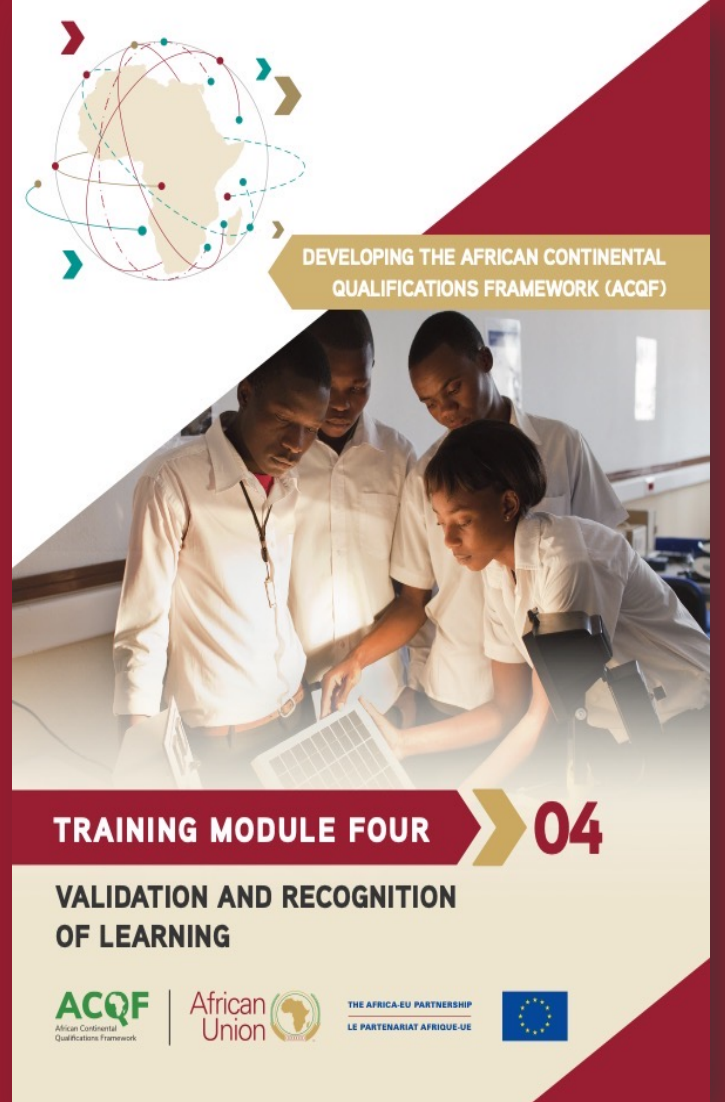
**ACQF**  
African Continental  
Qualifications Framework

**African Union**

THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP  
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



# Introduction to ACQF Guideline 4: Validation and Recognition of Learning



DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL  
QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)

**TRAINING MODULE FOUR** **04**

**VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION  
OF LEARNING**

**ACQF**  
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# Purpose of Guideline 4: Validation and Recognition of Learning

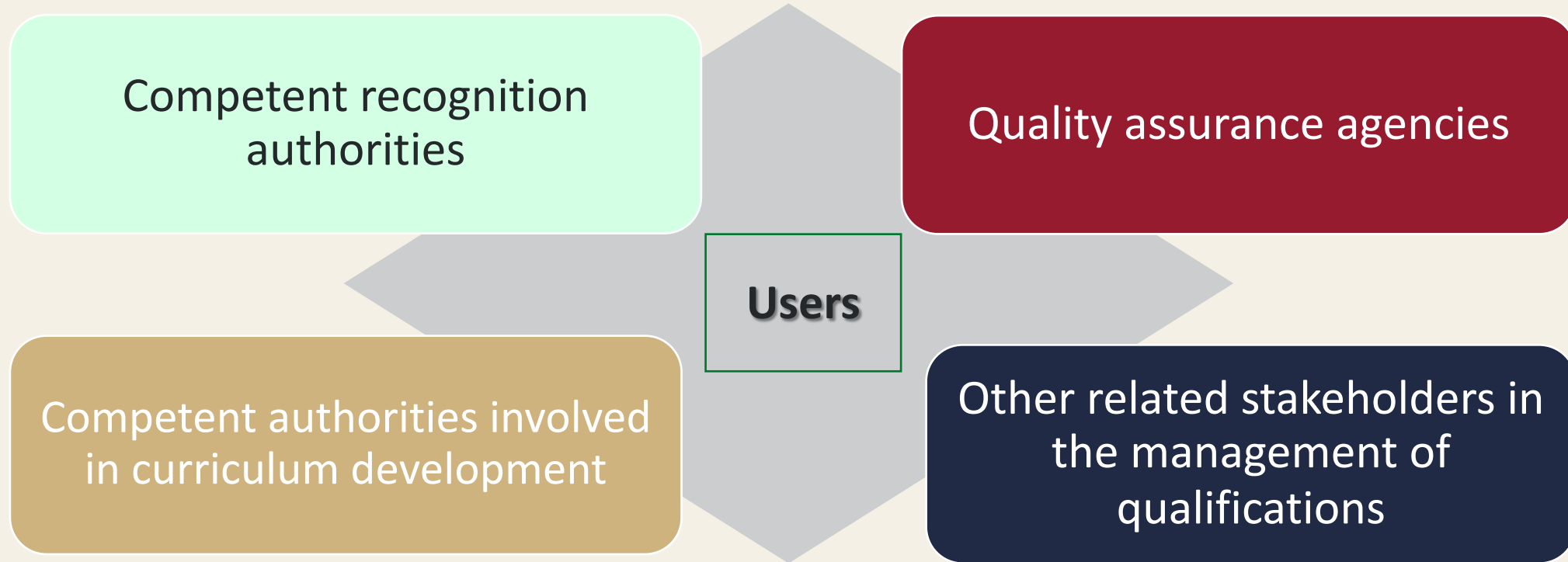


To provide member States with a framework for fair and transparent validation and recognition of learning



To facilitate mobility of persons from one country to another to study, research, teach or work

# Target Users of Guideline 4



# Objectives of Guideline 4

**Facilitate  
Recognition of  
qualifications  
among African  
States**

**Facilitate Systematic  
exchange of  
information between  
ACQF, NQFs and  
recognition  
structures (ARC)**



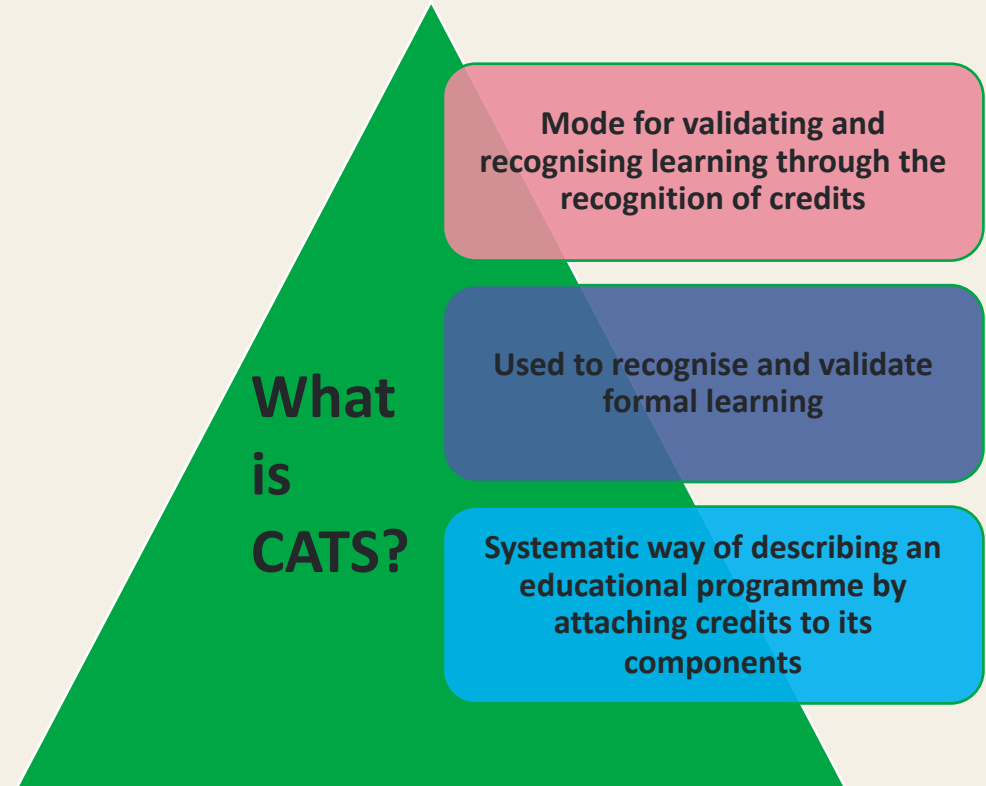
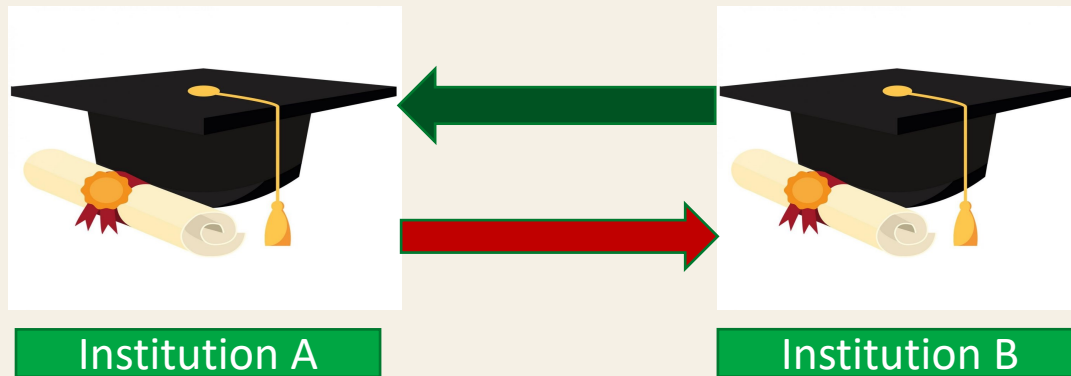
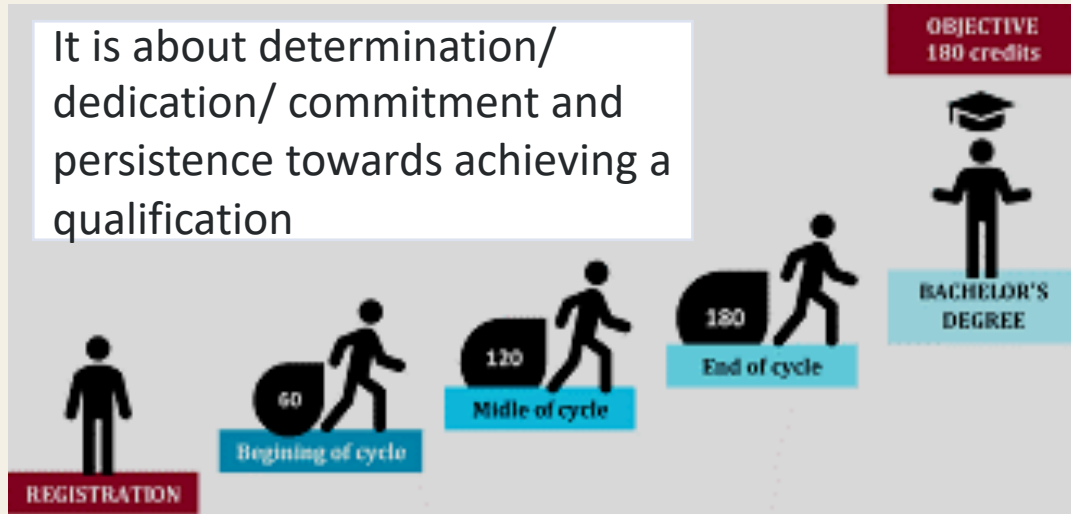
**Facilitate RPL  
within and  
among African  
States**

**Facilitate  
Implementatio  
n of CATS in  
Africa**

02

# Credit Accumulation and Transfer in the Context of the ACQF

# Main Concepts of CATS



It is about saving for the future



# Main Concepts of CATS...cont'd

## Credit

- Estimated measure/ numerical value of workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes

## Credit rating

- Process of determining a numerical value/ credit of a learning programme, course/ module

## Credit accumulation

- Process of acquiring credits for learning towards a qualification

## Credit transfer

- Process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credits in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context

# Main Concepts of CATS...cont'd

- Credits should comprise all the learning activities of the student, inclusive of contact time, private study, research, assignment writing, industrial visits and attachments, assessment, etc.
- It is common practice for institutions to accept the transfer of credit from other institutions up to a ceiling of 50% of the total credits required for the award of a qualification.

## Types of credit transfers: vertical, horizontal and diagonal

- **Block Credit Transfer:** entails reducing the total credit of the receiving programme by the amount of credits from the completed programme.
- **Course Exemption:** An individual may be exempted from taking a specific course or module of a programme based on the learning achieved in previous studies. This is applicable to both completed and uncompleted programmes.

# Principles of CATS



# Principles of CATS...cont'd

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

# Key principles of CATS...cont'd

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

**7**  
Principle

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

# Purpose of CATS



CATS provides a methodical and systematic approach to validation and recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies previously acquired in a formal learning setting for purposes of facilitating lifelong learning and labour mobility

# Benefits of CATS



Facilitates easy mobility of learners and workers, also knowledge and skills transfer, global citizenship



Promotes lifelong learning



**Duplication of learning**

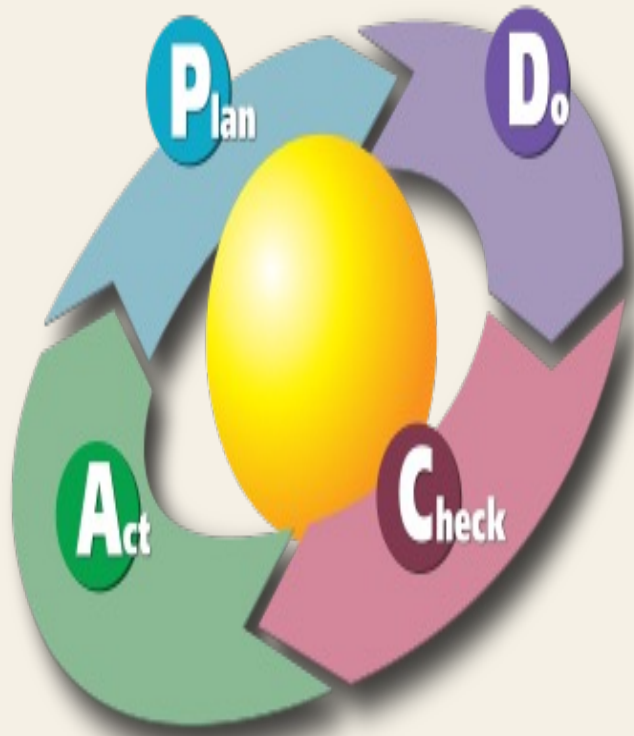
**QUALITY**  
**QUALIFICATIONS**

03

# Development and Implementation of CATS at National Level



# Process Approach to the Development and Implementation of CATS



## PLAN:

- Why CATS? Objectives?
- Enabling Legislation in place?
- NQF/ NQS elaborated?
- Governance structures?
- Scope of CATS - define
- Who are the key stakeholders?
- Financing arrangements

## DO:

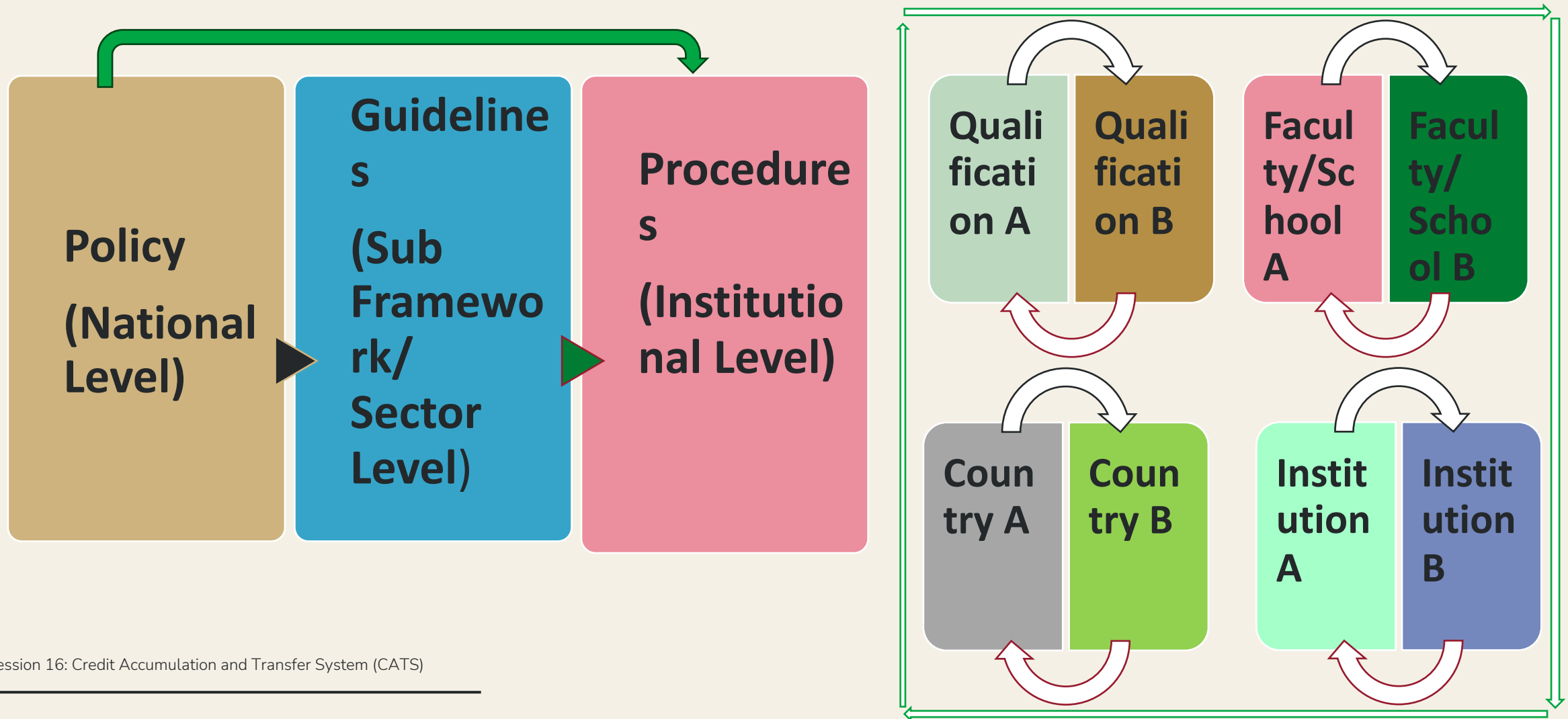
- Constitute a Technical Working Group
- Define ToRs for the TWG
- Develop CATS Policy
- Implement CATS – Guidelines and Procedures

## ACT:

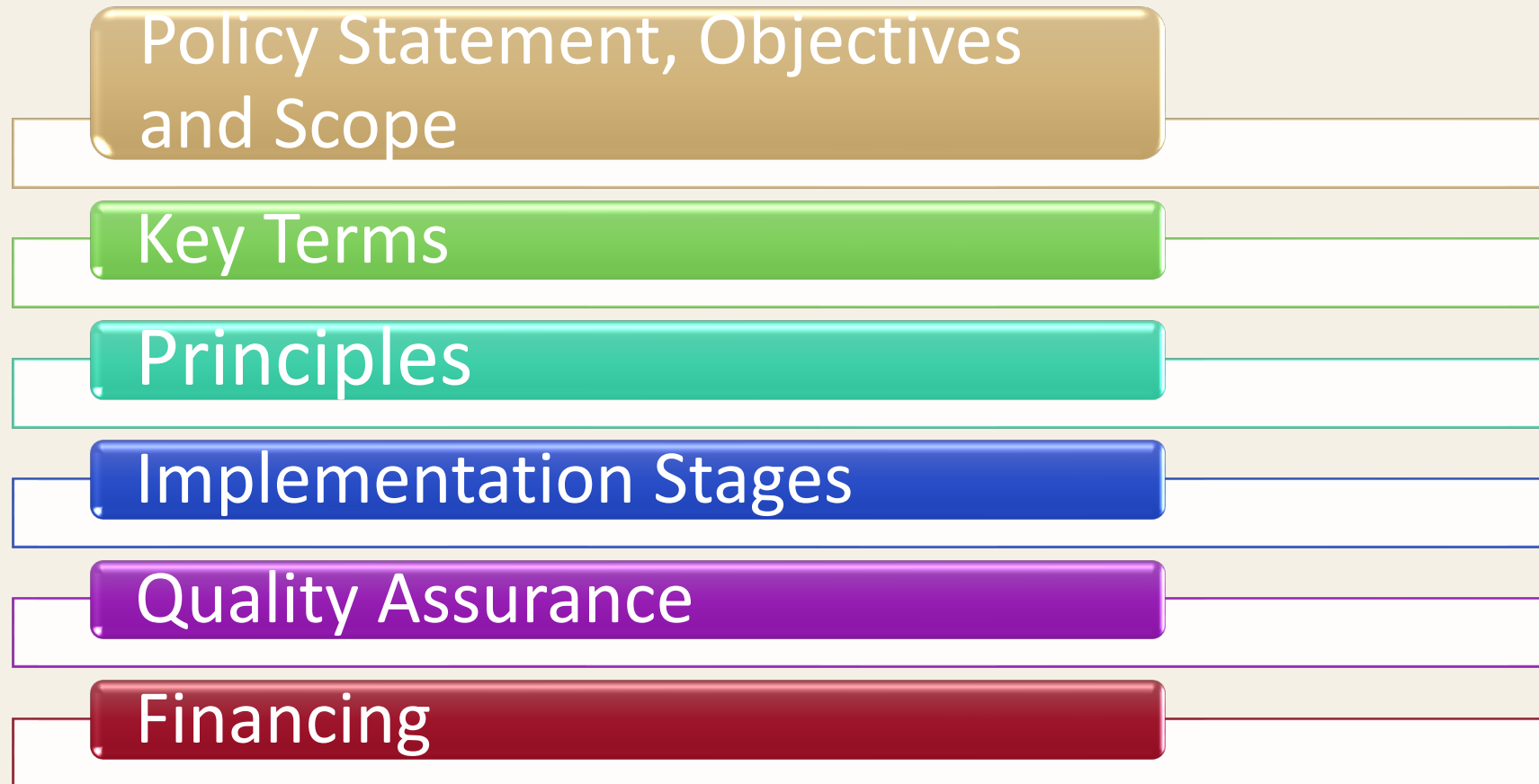
- Take corrective action – amend, revise or replace policy, guidelines or procedures if deviations from objectives are observed
- Sustain policy, guidelines or procedures if CATS objectives are constantly met

**CHECK:** (against objectives)  
Assess effectiveness of policy/ guidelines/ procedures – at registration/ accreditation of learning programmes and compliance audits

# CATS Implementation Approaches



# Key Elements for Policies and Guidelines



# Policies Guiding the Implementation of CATS

**Document CAT Processes:** rules and guidelines on how to compare learning outcomes, notional hours, content and competences should be clearly documented



**Establish Internal Quality Committees:** to regulate adherence of the CATS to requirements.



**Develop Articulation and Access Procedures:** progression within sub frameworks should be clearly outlined

# 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

# Translation of study/ work hours into credits

System 1

1 credit = 10 hours  
(e.g. Zambia, South  
Africa, Kenya)

System 2

1 credit = 25 – 30  
hours (e.g. Tunisia,  
Uganda, Algeria)

*Note: In some jurisdictions, 1 Credit is equated to 40 – 60 notional hours*

# Allocation of Credits to a Learning Programme

- Credits are not based on complexity of materials a student will interact with, but rather the workload for attainment of the expected learning outcomes.
- Credits are allocated on either term, semester or annual basis.
- Part-time learners are not expected to carry the same workload in the same study term/semester or year as full-time learners, unless special provisions are made to bridge the gap in time.
- Credits are awarded for successful attainment of learning outcomes.
- Credits denote a measure of learning that has taken place. Failed courses are not assigned credits.

# Example of Allocation of Credits to Course

- Lectures: two hours per week for eight weeks 16 hours
- Tutorials: two hours twice weekly for eight weeks 32 hours
- Tutorials (preparation): four hours per tutorial (16 tutorials) 64 hours
- Specific assignments: four six-hour assignments 24 hours
- Excursion 4 hours
- Library/archive assignment 4 hours
- Required literature: 665 pages at five pages per hour 133 hours
- Written examination 3 hours

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Total = 280 hours = 28 Credits – for 1 Credit = 10 notional hours.



# Challenges to CATS Implementation

Different education systems – e.g. Francophone vs British

Lack of trust among education and training institutions

Differences in structure and content of learning programmes

Absence of clear procedures and QA systems

Learning outcomes approach: differences in understanding and application

# Key lessons for a country engaging in the CATS development process

- CATS to be enabled by legislation.
- Structures for CATS implementation to be put in place.
- CATS policy/ guidelines/ procedures a must.
- CATS should be linked to the NQF – determine applicability of CATS to NQF Levels/ Sub frameworks, also NQS as applicable.
- Stakeholder involvement key to the success of CATS.
- CATS should not be too prescriptive – institutional autonomy to be respected.
- Synergies between HEIs to be encouraged.
- Quality assurance should form an integral part of CATS. CAT should only be applicable to accredited/ recognised institutions.
- Promotion of learner mobility and life-long learning should always be at the heart of any CATS.



## GROUP EXERCISE

**QUESTION:**

**As part of the quality control circle on learning programme (LP) design and development in your institution, you have been tasked to allocate credits to a 4 year Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree that was recently developed by your team. The LP has 16 core courses, and 8 electives from which 4 are to be selected (1 per year).**

**Using imaginary courses and credit system of your choice, demonstrate how you would go about allocating credits to the LP.**

**THANK  
YOU!**