



Joint position of the Global University Associations Forum (GUAF) on the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

Addressed to: Governments and other public authorities, as well as other stakeholders responsible for processes and decisions in the context of academic recognition in the countries of Africa, the Arab Region, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America; in particular higher education institutions who are members of associations in GUAF, as their pro-active support will be crucial in implementing the Global Recognition Convention.

The [Global University Associations Forum](#) (GUAF) brings together representatives of university associations from Africa, the Arab Region, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.

The [UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#), or Global Recognition Convention in short, has entered into force. Based on the crucial groundwork of the Regional Conventions conducted by the UNESCO Regions, the Global Recognition Convention is another step towards realising a milestone in establishing universal principles for fair and transparent recognition of qualifications in higher education on a global scale. GUAF welcomes the revived attention paid to recognition matters entailed in preparations for the signature of the Global Recognition Convention since its adoption in Paris on 25 November 2019. In particular, the Global Recognition Convention does not replace the five [regional conventions on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education](#), and rather aims to build on and enhance the cohesion between them, it presents a powerful legal framework based on which recognition authorities across the world can review and further consolidate their recognition practices.

On a global level, the increasing digitalisation and internationalisation of higher education highlight the need for a global convention committing countries and their recognition authorities to fair and transparent recognition, since these developments can be expected to increase demand for recognition of qualifications and study periods abroad in the foreseeable future. They also highlight the necessity of exchange and collaboration across borders in education, to ensure that higher education students are

educated as global citizens. Another need arising in the current context is for researchers and educators that help to identify innovative solutions to global challenges.

However, GUAF cautions that signing and ratifying the Global Recognition Convention alone will not suffice in bringing about the document's vision of "fair, transparent, consistent, coherent, timely and reliable recognition of qualifications concerning higher education" across the globe. Its implementation will likely entail much bigger challenges, as has been experienced by all regions of the world with regard to their regional conventions. Such challenges include, for example, developing a common understanding of and acceptance for the concept of "substantial differences", the recognition of qualifications of refugees, financial obstacles or, on a more basic level, lacking awareness of the importance and benefits of cross-border recognition of qualifications.

In light of this situation, and in view of the many benefits that the global and regional conventions can render when properly implemented and resourced, GUAF calls on governments, higher education institutions and other stakeholders to tackle these challenges and provide a suitable environment for the implementation of the regional conventions and the Global Recognition Convention. GUAF particularly wishes to highlight that continued investment in the implementation of fair recognition through the regional conventions should remain a goal of countries and their higher education systems worldwide, since the Global Recognition Convention was not created with the intention to replace its regional predecessors, but rather to strengthen them.

GUAF proposes a focus on the following four areas:

1) Invest in recognition infrastructure and resources

GUAF urges **national and regional governments**, and other decision-takers in higher education, to ensure adequate human, financial and material resources, and the necessary physical and online infrastructure, for the implementation of systematic, transparent and fair recognition as a standard procedure. This includes, in particular, the establishment and maintenance of national information centres on recognition, which is also a stipulation of the Global Recognition Convention and many regional conventions. GUAF calls on all countries that have not yet established such centres to do so without delay and provide them with the necessary infrastructure and resources to play their roles as the national information point in both a national and international context.

2) Enhance professional development for staff involved in recognition

Competent recognition authorities, and in particular **higher education institutions**, need to provide their staff with the knowledge and skills needed for convention-compliant recognition, both in the form of training materials such as guidelines and manuals, and synchronous training and information provision sessions to keep staff abreast of new developments. GUAF thus calls for enhanced investment in ensuring

continuous professional development of relevant higher education staff in matters of recognition.

3) Establish networks of recognition professionals

The exchange of information and good practice among credential evaluators, admissions officers and other higher education professionals who are knowledgeable about recognition matters supports transparent, harmonised recognition procedures and higher education staff in correctly and efficiently conducting their work. In addition, recognition is by its very nature an international matter and requires cross-border collaboration. GUAF thus calls upon **national authorities and higher education institutions** to establish networks as platforms for peer-learning, support, and collaboration among recognition professionals. Such a collaborative approach would also foster a cost-efficient sharing of infrastructure and resources across countries and regions. While many networks have been established or are being set up at regional levels, there would be an added value, especially regarding the Global Recognition Convention, in supporting inter-regional networks, policy dialogue and practice exchange.

4) Monitor progress in the implementation of recognition conventions

GUAF advocates for **joint efforts at institutional, national and international level** to contribute to and provide data for the monitoring of progress in the implementation of recognition conventions, both regional and global, as applicable in the individual context. At the institutional level, in particular, this need not entail a strain on staff time, if recognition matters are adequately covered through internal and external quality assurance, thus rendering data collection and evaluation a regular activity of higher education institutions.

The work invested in the implementation of any recognition convention needs to be context-sensitive and reflect the situation and challenges experienced in institutions, countries, and regions. In addition, while this work requires considerable efforts, concerted inter-regional dialogue, cooperation and support will be powerful tools to implement the Global Recognition Convention, both legally and in practice.

To help achieve this, GUAF commits to continuing its support to higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders in strengthening their recognition systems and procedures.

This joint position has been issued by the following organizations:



**Latin American & The Caribbean
Space for Higher Education
(ENLACES)**



**European University Association
(EUA)**



**Association of African Universities
(AAU)**



اتحاد الجامعات العربية
**Association of Arab Universities
(AARU)**



**ASEAN University Network
(AUN)**



**China Association of Higher Education
(CAHE)**



**Association of Indian Universities
(AIU)**



**Universities
Canada.**

Universities Canada