Dialogue Session 3: Current Development of a National and Inter-regional Credit Transfer System in the Context of Flexible Education

How Can We Count Credits for Flexible Education in Asia?: The Introduction of “Asian Academic Credits” [AACs]¹)

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I. Needs of a Permeable Framework for an Inter-regional Credit Transfer System in Asia

II. A Comparative Study of Higher Education in 24 Asian Nations

III. Three aspects of general tendencies in 24 Asian higher education systems

IV. The Concept of “Asian Academic Credits” (AACs)

V. How Can We Count Credits for Flexible Education
Positive outcomes from the development of an Inter-regional credit transfer system:

1. “Student Centered” higher education in Asia
2. “One Asian Higher Education Area”
3. Truly internationalized workers
4. Sustainable regional peace with cross-cultural understanding and mutual trust
5. More globally competitive regional economy
Flexible Education in the Asian region must have;

1. **100% harmonized & systematic way of transparency**

2. A **measurement tool** to judge the value of an individual’s educational experience and convert it into the educational system of one institution or nation.

3. Thus, a **permeable framework** of higher education is needed for Asian universities to promote a **trusted and attractive student’s “free mobility”** in the Asian Higher Education.
A permeable framework is a set of various tools that measures the amount and magnitude of educational values a student has acquired. These standardized measures illustrate specific differences among institutions regarding their educational contents, thereby enabling institutions to improve their level of mutual understanding and trust. As a result, use of the framework helps promote mutually trusted student mobility among participating institutions.
1. ECTS² is one type of permeable framework in Europe. It allows students to transfer credits from very different types of educational systems and types of education.

2. 1 (one) ECTS = 25-30 hours of student workload [25-30 hours/ECTS = 1500~1800 h / 60 points] (an average workload of a typical European worker).

3. ECTS is a very systematic and permeable credit transfer system: 60 ECTS/year (consists of the largest numbers of common measures, i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 20, 30, 60) for the world.
A research project (KAKENHI-#24402045) between 2012-2014 has studied the general framework of higher education in 24 Asian nations and regions, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei-Darussalam, Cambodia, China, East-Timor, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, South-Korea, Sri-Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, The Philippines, Vietnam.

Although there are many indicators, three key indicators related to the establishment of an aligned academic credit system is introduced in this presentation.
1. **Objectives**: To investigate an overall framework of higher education and identify crucial differences and also similarities among 24 nations and regions in Asia.

2. **Research Methods**: (1) Review of secondary sources, especially governmental and university documents regarding their educational systems and regulations. (2) Interviews with government officials and university representatives. (3) [Japan] A survey of all universities in Japan.
II-(3). A List of Researchers Taking Part in This Project

- Akira NINOMIYA, Hijiyama University
- Futao HUANG, Hiroshima University
- Hiroko AKIBA, Hitotsubashi University
- Hiroshi OTA, Hitotsubashi University
- Jianxiu PAN, Osaka University
- K. L. MAHARAJAN, Hiroshima University
- Masataka MURASAWA, Hiroshima University
- Miki SUGIMURA, Sophia University
- Sounghee KIM, National Institute for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation
- Taiji HOTTA, Hiroshima University
- Takao KAMIBEPPU, Tokyo Jogakkan University
- Yuki WATABE, Hitotsubashi University
Three key Indicators to develop an aligned academic credit system are regulations or tendencies related to;

1. **Student workload per academic credit**
2. **Contact hours in class per academic credit**
3. **The total number of credits per year**
Some nations tend to follow CATS$^3$ in UK, namely 1 credit = 10 hours of student workload.

Many nations tend to follow a system somewhat similar to the American system, namely 45-48 hours of student workload.

Two nations tend to use the concept of workload for their workers, namely 40 hours of student workload.
Most nations have definitions of one credit by counting 14-16 hours of teaching.

Another small group may have similarities to the British university calendar, namely 12-13 weeks of teaching (but their credits are based upon student workload).
Most of nations have an average amount of credits per year between 30-40 credits

Another very small group of nations have 120 credits per year, similar to the British system
Credit transfer systems developed in Asia tend to model ECTS.

ECTS is a very systematic and permeable credit transfer system. However, student workload for ECTS does not reflect an Asian workload (1500-1800 hrs./year in Europe vs. 1800-2100+ (?)) hrs./year in Asia)

Asia already has a similar tendency (One credit ≈ 40-50 hours in their regional credit systems)
IV-(1). The Concept of Asian Academic Credits (AACs)

This proposal is based upon the results of two of HOTTA’s comparative studies; one for ASEAN⁴+3 nations in 2010 and the other for 24 nations in Asia between 2012-14

A proposed framework of credit system is;

One AACs ≡ 38-48 hours of Student workload,
(including 13-16 hours of teaching (academic) hours)

*Student workload is the total amount of hours students spend for study, including not only lectures, but also homework, lab, writing term papers, etc.
IV-(2). Usefulness of AACs

AACs will allow many Asian institutions to transfer most of their credits on a one-to-one basis among themselves.

1. The proposal progresses to an even more developed (possible) conversion table below with Asian and other regions.
**IV-(3). The Conversion of AACs with Other Systems**

The proposal continues to an even more developed (possible) conversion table below with Asian and other regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nations &amp; Systems</th>
<th>ASIA</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>ECTS</th>
<th>CLAR&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt; (Latin America)</th>
<th>UK (CATS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credit Conversion</strong></td>
<td>1 AACs</td>
<td>≧1 credit</td>
<td>≧1.5 ECTS</td>
<td>≧1.5 CLAR</td>
<td>≧3 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student workload</strong></td>
<td>38-48 hours</td>
<td>≧45 hours</td>
<td>37.5-45 hours</td>
<td>37.5-45 hours</td>
<td>Converted from ECTS (30 hours*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching hours</strong></td>
<td>13-16 hours</td>
<td>≧15~16 hours</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This chart requires more detailed explanations regarding each indicator*
IV-(4). Practicality and Limit of AACs

**PRACTICALITY**

1. Simple conversion of credits with not only other Asian & Pacific universities, but also universities throughout the world

**LIMITS & FURTHER CHALLENGES**

2. No function exists to measure the level of difficulty or the equivalency of course contents by itself. Thus, we need transparency, compatibility, and quality assurance of teaching curriculums, especially using AACs and “Learning Outcomes” effectively.
IV-(5). New Developments in AACs

1. UMAP\(^6\) has adopted the concept of AACs as a new concept of UCTS\(^7\) from 2013

2. The SEAMEO-RIHED\(^8\) is now reviewing a possible use of the concept of AACs as a part of their new credit transfer scheme, temporarily called, “ACTFA\(^9\)” for student mobility among ASEAN nations.

3. The ASEAN+3 Ministers of Education meeting’s working group is about to discuss the general framework for student mobility, partially including the concept of AACs.
V. How Can We Count Credits for Flexible Education in Asia?

1. Change the culture of counting academic credits from a teaching hour based system to a student’s workload based system

2. Use the concept of “Asian Academic Credits” (AACs) in Asian higher education

3. Use learning outcomes to measure and prove the quality of education
THANK YOU

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1. AACs: Asian Academic Credits
2. ECTS: European Credit Transfer System
3. CATS: Credit for Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (in UK):
4. ASEAN: Association of South-East Asian Nations
5. CLAR : Latin American Reference Credit
6. UMAP: University Mobility in Asia and Pacific
7. UCTS: UMAP Credit Transfer System
8. SEAMEO-RIHED: Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Center for Higher Education
9. ACTFA: Academic Credit Transfer for ASEAN
Some References on Credit Transfer Systems


