UNESCO standard-setting instruments

International Conventions
- Legally binding
- Ratification needed

Recommendations & Declarations
- Ratification not needed

Consensus-building
- Policy briefs
- Technical notes
- Position papers
- Meeting summaries

Regional Capacity Building Workshop, 21-23 October 2015, Bangkok, Thailand
Since 1975, UNESCO has initiated six regional conventions on the recognition of studies, degrees, and diplomas in higher education:

- Latin America and the Caribbean (1975)
- The Mediterranean States (1976)
- The Arab States (1978)
- Europe (1979)
- Africa (1981)
- Asia and the Pacific (1983)

Legally binding instruments aiming at promoting academic mobility at regional level.
To respond to new developments in higher education, a number of regional conventions have either undergone or are undergoing revision.


- **Asia and the Pacific**: Revised regional convention adopted at the International Conference of States, 25-26 November, 2011, Tokyo, Japan.

- **Africa**: Revised regional convention adopted at the International Conference of States, 11-12 December 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- **Arab States**: undergoing revision.
The 1983 Asia-Pacific Regional Convention

- In line with UNESCO’s mandate to promote global intellectual and moral solidarity
- The first Asia-Pacific Regional Convention adopted in 1983 in Bangkok, Thailand (i.e. the UNESCO Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific – the “1983 Convention”).

Regional Capacity Building Workshop, 21-23 October 2015, Bangkok, Thailand
State parties to the 1983 Regional Convention

Signatories of State Parties to the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 16 December 1983. (As of 1 April 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Date of deposit of instrument</th>
<th>Type of instrument</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>25/09/1984</td>
<td>Approval</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
<td>23/09/1985</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>10/01/1986</td>
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<td>28/04/1988</td>
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<td>Republic of Korea</td>
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<td>Tajikistan</td>
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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>14/03/1997</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
<td>26/11/2003</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>30/01/2008</td>
<td>Ratification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1This Convention entered into force on 23 October 1985. It subsequently entered into force for each State one month after the date of deposit of that State’s instrument, except in cases of notifications of succession, where the entry into force occurred on the date on which the State assumed responsibility for conducting its international relations.
The need to revise the 1983 Convention

- New developments in higher education led to a revision process and signing of the Revised Convention in 2011 in Tokyo, Japan.
  - Continued massification of higher education
  - The accelerating cross-border mobility of students, professionals, institutions and programmes
  - The diversification of higher education providers
  - The increasing use of ICT in the delivery of HE programmes
  - The development of national qualification frameworks
Cross-border mobility of students: a big issue with the support of a UNESCO Convention

Global mobility: Long-term growth in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship

Growth in internationalisation of tertiary education (1975-2012, in millions)

1975 0.8m
1980 1.1m
1985 1.1m
1990 1.7m
2000 2.1m
2005 3.0m
2010 4.2m
2011 4.4m
2012 4.5m

1983 Convention
2011 Revised Convention

Source: OECD, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and UNESCO Bangkok. Data on foreign enrolment worldwide comes from both the OECD and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). UIS provided the data on all countries for 1975-95 and most of the non-OECD countries for 2000, 2005, 2010, 2011 and 2012. The OECD provided the data on OECD countries and other non-OECD economies in 2000 and 2012. Both sources use similar definitions, thus making their combination possible. Missing data were imputed with the closest data reports to ensure that breaks in data coverage do not result in breaks in time series.

The data points in the shaded area correspond to a different time scale than the rest of the time series but are presented for information as they are the last two years available, and 2012 is the year of reference.
The process leading to the Revision of the 1983 Convention

Since the adoption of the regional convention, a regional committee has been meeting biannually to examine periodic reports from state parties on the progress and difficulties in applying the convention.

- **Kunming 2005**: 8th session of the regional committee. A working group formed to revise or amend some parts of the convention, taking into account the many challenges of cross-border education.

- **Seoul 2007**: 9th session of the regional committee. Further discussion occurred.

- **Manila 2009**: 10th session of the regional committee. A draft of the revised convention accepted.

- **Tokyo 2011**: The revised convention adopted
Adoption of the 2011 Revised Convention

- **Adopted** at the International Conference of States to Examine and Adopt the Amendments to the 1983 Regional Convention on 25-26, November 2011 in Tokyo, Japan
- Renamed as **Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education**
- **Signed** by 8 member states: Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Republic of Korea, Timor Leste, and Turkey
- Also signed by the Holy See
- **Ratification** by five member states is required for the revised convention to **enter into force**
- So far **Australia** and **China** have ratified the 2011 Revised Regional Convention
So far **Australia** and **China** have ratified and approved the 2011 Revised Convention and deposited their instruments with UNESCO.
The purposes of the recognition

- the 'recognition' of a foreign certificate, diploma or degree of higher education means its acceptance by the competent authorities of a Contracting State and the granting to the holder of the rights enjoyed by persons possessing a national certificate, diploma or degree with which the foreign one is assessed as comparable by competent authorities within the Contracting State. Such rights extend to either the pursuit of studies or the practice of a profession, or both, according to the applicability of the recognition.

- Article 1, the 1983 convention
The purposes of the recognition

- Recognition in a Party of a qualification in higher education issued in another Party may have one or more of the following consequences (Article VI.4 of the 2011 Convention):
  
  (a) **access to further higher education studies**, including relevant examinations or to preparations for a postgraduate course;

  (b) **the use of an academic title**, subject to the laws and regulations of the Party or the jurisdiction thereof, in which recognition is sought;

  (c) **access to employment opportunities**, subject to the laws and regulations of the Party or the jurisdiction thereof, in which recognition is sought.
Competent recognition authorities

- The CRAs means a governmental or non-governmental body officially authorized by government who are competent to make decisions in recognition matters.

- **Centralized systems**: Central authorities are competent to make the decisions in recognition matters.

- **Decentralized systems**: The competence to make decisions on recognition matters lies with components of a party.

- **Institutional or professional autonomy**: The competence to make decisions on recognition matters lies with individual higher education institutions or other professional entities.
Basic principles related to the assessment of qualifications

- Holders of qualifications issued in one of the parties shall have adequate access, upon request to the competent recognition authorities to an assessment of these qualifications in a timely manner.
- Assessment shall focus on knowledge and skills achieved.
- The procedures and criteria used in the assessment shall be transparent, coherent, reliable, fair and non-discriminatory.
- Decision made shall be based on the information available. Countries and HEIs need to provide clear and relevant information (information-based comparison).
Recognition of qualifications giving access to higher education

- Recognition for giving access to higher education between parties shall be given, unless substantial difference can be shown (school leaving certificates)

- Qualifications obtained from non-traditional modes which allow for access to higher education in one party should be assessed in a fair manner in other parties (optional)

- Countries still have the right to make decisions within their own constitutional and regulatory framework (general requirements/specific requirements/language proficiency, etc.)
Recognition of partial studies

- Partial studies means any homogeneous part of a higher education programme, while not a complete programme in itself, can be equated with a significant acquisition of knowledge and skills.

- Each party shall recognize, where appropriate, or at least assess partial studies completed within the framework of a higher education programme in another party.

- Recognition shall be granted unless substantial difference can be shown. Some countries have bilateral agreements which allow for the recognition of partial studies between them or their institutions.
Each party should develop procedures for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons, and persons in a refugee-like situation within its constitutional, legal, and regulatory framework.

Displaced person means a person forced to move from their locality or environment and occupational activities.
Each party should provide **adequate information** to enable other competent authorities to make recognition decisions, including:

- a description of its HE system
- an overview of the different types of HEIs belonging to its HE system and their typical characteristics
- a list of recognized and/or accredited HEIs (public and private) belonging to its HE system
- an explanation of **quality assurance mechanisms**, and
- a list of education institutions located outside its territory which the party considers as belonging to its education system.
Each Party shall provide **relevant**, **accurate** and **up-to-date** information in order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications in higher education (Article VIII.2, 2011 Revised Convention)

Each Party shall take adequate measures for the development and maintenance of a **national information centre** (Article VIII.3, 2011 Revised Convention)
UNESCO Diploma Supplement

- A common template to provide additional information on student's qualifications (i.e. recognition-friendly)
- More than an academic transcript
- Enhancing transparency and comparability without undermining local traditions
- Promoted by Article VIII.4 of the 2011 Revised Convention
National and Regional Mechanisms

- National mechanisms
  - Competent recognition authorities - governmental or non-governmental body officially authorised with making decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications (e.g. centralized or decentralized systems, see Article II.1)
  - National Information Centres (NICs)
    - The form of the NIC can vary (Article VIII.3)

- Regional coordination and monitoring mechanisms
  - Sessions of the Regional Committee on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in Asia and the Pacific
Establishes regional norms and codes of best practices in the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications (standard setting)

Promotes institutional reforms and capacity building with regard to QA systems in higher education (capacity building)

Supports collection of best policies and practices for experience sharing and knowledge building (clearinghouse)

Serves as a platform or mechanism for regional cooperation in higher education (catalyst for international cooperation)

Designed as a dynamic tool which can be adjusted regularly to the developments in higher education at both the Asia-Pacific regional as well as international levels (future development)
Thank you very much for your attention!