Ratification of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

Australia’s experience

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Australia’s treaty-level commitments

- UNESCO Regional Recognition Conventions
  - 1983 Asia-Pacific Convention (ratified 1985)
  - 2011 Revised Asia-Pacific Convention (ratified 2014)

- Provide the overarching principles and tools used in recognition for academic mobility
Pathway to ratification

Oct 2012
- Minister for Education agrees to support ratification and seeks endorsement from Minister for Foreign Affairs and Attorney-General

Nov 2012
- Ministers agree that the Convention be tabled with Parliament (through JSCOT)

May 2013
- Convention tabled with National Impact Analysis

June 2013
- Parliament (through JSCOT) recommends Australia enters treaty

May 2014
- Convention submitted to Executive Council with Explanatory Memorandum
- Executive Council agrees to ratify and Minister for Foreign Affairs signs instrument of ratification

July 2014
- Australia and China’s Ambassadors to UNESCO jointly deposit instruments of ratification with UNESCO
National Interest Analysis

• Detailed document
  – Reasons to enter the treaty action
  – Obligations of the treaty
  – Implementation of the treaty
  – Costs of meeting treaty obligations
  – Ramifications of future treaty changes
  – Withdrawal or denunciation
  – Consultation undertaken and feedback received
Explanatory Memorandum

- High-level summary document
  - Process followed and Ministers consulted
  - Purpose of ratification
  - Summary of obligations
  - Impact of ratification
  - Entry into force
Key obligations - competent recognition authorities

• II.1.1 and II.1.2
  – Government CRAs immediately bound by principles

• II.1.3
  – Other (autonomous) CRAs should be encouraged to apply principles

• II.2
  – UNESCO to be informed of CRAs
Key obligations – recognition principles

- III.1 – access to recognition services
- III.2 – transparent, reliable, coherent, fair and non-discriminatory procedures and criteria
- III.3 – burden of proof
- IV, V, VI – recognition unless substantially different
- VII – recognition in absence of documentary evidence
- VIII – information provision, national information centre, UNESCO Diploma Supplement
Consultation and advocacy

• Support needed at multiple levels
  – Political
  – Government
  – Higher education sector
  – Other competent recognition authorities, if relevant
• Practical advice on implications for stakeholders
• Quality assurance and qualifications framework authorities are valuable stakeholders
Factors for success

- Simple and consistent position on national benefits
- Link to existing government policies and national priorities/policies
- Stakeholder consultation to identify and address concerns
- Phased implementation strategy with realistic timeframes