

AFRICAN UNION

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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 251 11 5517 700 Fax: 251 11 5517844

Website: www.au.int

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Technical Consultation Workshop on Set-up of Pan-African
Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency**

13 – 14 December 2018, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CONCEPT NOTE

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Vision of African Union to build an integrated Africa requires a harmonised education system. African Heads of State and Government expressed their commitment to set up mechanisms for harmonisation and quality assurance to ensure comparable higher education in Africa, promote mutual recognition of qualifications, credit and competence portability and enhanced intra-African collaboration in higher education and research. Harmonisation seeks a shared view on quality, shared criteria and standards and an equivalent way of assessing the quality. Given the importance of quality assurance and accreditation for harmonising higher education in Africa, there is strong need for effective networking of quality assurance and accreditation agencies at national, regional and continental levels.

Because different higher education systems in Africa are structured in different ways, it is imperative to integrate into a continental system of harmonization in order to ensure the recognition of qualifications across the continent. Harmonization with strong continental cooperation in quality assurance and accreditation is recognized to be instrumental in promoting internationalization of higher education and to facilitating student and staff mobility.

There is an urgent need to exert coordinated efforts to put in place pan African quality assurance and accreditation frameworks, to crown the efforts undertaken over the last decade in the harmonisation of higher education in Africa. Although several countries in Africa have established national accreditation regulatory bodies, there is not yet an agreed continental accreditation system of higher education. The Executive Council Decision of January 2012 requested the AU Commission to develop an African Accreditation Agency in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. This was a reiteration of the Second Decade of Education goals for harmonization of higher education, when the Pan African University development process highlighted the need for a commonly agreed pan African accreditation mechanism. Efforts will need to be made to ascertain comparability and equivalencies across nations and regions in higher education quality monitoring, leading to an African-wide framework.

The African Union Commission (AUC) therefore initiated the development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), in collaboration with the European Commission and the Association of African Universities. The PAQAF was developed through a highly consultative process, and validated at a continental workshop involving representatives of universities, national and regional quality assurance agencies, and ministries for higher education. The validated PAQAF was adopted by the AU Assembly at the 2016 January Summit.

It is also imperative to reinforce cooperation between national quality assurance and accreditation agencies to promote the establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency for higher education in Africa. The creation of continent-wide accreditation body will strengthen cooperation in quality monitoring of higher education institutions; development of compatible methodologies; harmonization of accreditation procedures; mutual recognition of academic qualifications; and facilitates the mobility of students and academics across the continent.

At the PAQAF Validation Workshop, it was agreed, *inter alia*, that a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency needs to be set up to operationalize PAQAF. The agency is expected to set and continuously review principles, standards and guidelines, as well as benchmarks for a harmonized continental quality assurance and accreditation system, in addition to other related functions.

The 2nd Specialized Technical Committee Meeting on Education, Science and Technology held in October 2017 requested the AU Commission to develop legal framework and organizational set-up for establishing a Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency. The Agenda 2063 First Ten-Year Implementation Plan envisages the creation of a continental Accreditation Agency. Moreover, one priority activity in 2019 Action Plan for the Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government (C10) Championing Education, Science, and Technology is operationalizing the set-up of the Continental Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency.

The African Union Commission therefore wishes to organise a workshop and convene a platform for key stakeholders from 29th – 30th November 2018 to discuss and critically examine the process of establishing a Continental Accreditation Agency and possible operational modalities.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop will have the following objectives:

- a. To exchange experiences and views among participants on quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms in Africa.
- b. To identify comparable practices that create basis for regional and continental harmonization in quality assurance systems.
- c. To identify areas of collaboration between quality assurance and accreditation agencies towards harmonization at regional and continental levels; and to create basis for establishing a Continental Accreditation Agency.

- d. To critically examine the mandate, roles and functions of the Pan-African QA and Accreditation Agency, and agree on possible operational modalities.
- e. To spell out the specific roles of African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) with respect to the Continental Accreditation Agency.
- f. To identify relationships of the Continental Accreditation Agency to national, and regional quality assurance regulatory bodies.

3. PARTICIPANTS

Participants of the workshop will be policy makers, experts and stakeholders including the following:

- Senior officials from Member States' Ministries of Higher Education, and Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies.
- Members of the CESA Higher Education Cluster including the Association of African Universities
- Higher Education Experts from Regional Higher Education Bodies
- Representatives of Regional University Associations
- Partner International Higher Education Agencies

4. VENUE OF THE MEETING

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

African Union Commission Headquarters

New Compound Conference Complex, Small Conference Hall 1