



# POLICY BRIEF

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## ENHANCING INTERNATIONALISATION IN ASEAN: CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEMS AND STUDENT MOBILITY

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE THIRD SHARE POLICY DIALOGUE

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second Policy Brief published by SHARE, the EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region, a four-year initiative by EU and ASEAN to support harmonisation and boost the quality of higher education (HE) systems in Southeast Asia.

SHARE's third Policy Dialogue in Hanoi, in June 2016, explored ways for universities to better fit the needs and make use of the potentials of the emerging ASEAN Community, especially regarding the potential of credit transfer systems (CTS) and student mobility schemes to stimulate internationalisation amongst ASEAN universities. Whether the aspirations of mobile and internationally minded graduates of the ASEAN Community will be fulfilled, depends largely on the ability of the regional HE landscape to meet demands for greater access to mobility tools and greater harmonisation of national structures, systems and agreements.

This policy brief also offers recommendations regarding strategies for the HE sector and its

stakeholders to engage with the student body, both at a system wide level and institutional level. National ministries can explore ways to recognise and engage with student concerns as well as to foster students' emerging ASEAN identity and mind-set. University leadership and academic faculty can work together to further develop learning-outcome focused curriculum design and leverage on an emerging national and regional credit transfer system. For ASEAN, the potential benefits of incorporating student concerns in decision-making are closely linked with the challenge of facilitating structured and meaningful student participation.

Ultimately, the premium benefit for ASEAN member states is the creation of a harmonised higher education area in which credentials and programmes are mutually recognised, hence improving overall trust and cooperation between students and faculty across ASEAN, and greater fulfilment of the aspirations of all members of the ASEAN Community.



## CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEMS AND MOBILITY SCHEMES

Creating an ASEAN mobility scheme within a harmonised HE space is a challenge, which requires the combined efforts of many stakeholders, least of which is the student body itself. Central to realising this ambition is the willingness and ability of policy makers and senior managers of higher education institutions (HEIs) to embrace the institutional change and promote student centred learning. As students are the key beneficiaries of ASEAN higher education, establishing a clear dialogue with students will assist in identifying key drivers of and obstacles to mobility.

Mobility tools are a practical necessity for trust and cooperation in a HE space that is complex and highly diverse, and where the perception of quality varies considerably according to the expectations of faculty, university leaders, decision-makers, employers and above all, the students. Mobility tools encompass provisions and agreements that facilitate the implementation of mobility through credit based learning, mutually recognised transcripts, learning agreements, and credit transfer and accumulation. The adoption of an ASEAN mobility charter, along the lines of the Erasmus charter that stipulates the duties and engagement of universities, will help make processes more transparent, enhancing the student experience through access to international learning. The online platform under development through SHARE will facilitate the adoption of these tools and their expansion across ASEAN institutions.

In forging connections between stakeholders within the HE landscape, waiting for systemic perfection is not an option. Together with key stakeholders, SHARE envisions the collaborative creation of shared aims and conditions for cooperation where all stakeholders work with each other in a pro-active, step-by-step and flexible manner. To this end, the third SHARE Policy Dialogue featured a plenary session designed and presented by ASEAN students, who expressed their difficulties in navigating the route to 'mobile' and internationally relevant learning, and delivered a strong message for an

international study experience, linked to an awakening of what it means to have an ASEAN identity amongst graduates that, after all, will become the leaders of the ASEAN of tomorrow.

SHARE's policy dialogues are platforms at which communities of decision-makers, experts and stakeholders share their views and concerns, and develop strategies based on knowledge and systems that are in place. SHARE's third Policy Dialogue built upon the good work that has already been achieved, such as the three credit transfer systems, which coexist across ASEAN (UCTS, ACTS, and AIMS). SHARE supports ASEAN's push for greater mobility, inter-cultural understanding of its societies and circulation of knowledge, which is instrumental to the emergence of strong knowledge societies and which will affirm ASEAN's commitment to developing a cohesive higher education space that is recognised and trusted globally.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ASEAN LEADERS, ASEAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION (ASED) AND ASEAN SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING ON EDUCATION (SOM-ED)

1. Encourage greater cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience between existing regional systems, such as those of the EU and ASEAN at institutional, national and regional levels. For example, the Bologna Process development of ECTS and diploma supplements can inform the further development of cohesive ASEAN credit transfers schemes across the UCTS, ACTS and AIMS. Through embracing and enhancing internationalisation, students can be encouraged to develop an ASEAN identity and mind-set, empowering them to act as agents of change in boosting regional integration.
2. Link credits to learning outcomes. Credits awarded for given programmes or courses are akin to a form of currency, and should represent the amount of learning gained by the students. The value of each credit resides in its association with demonstrable learning outcomes, which are what students know, understand and are able to do upon completion of the learning process (e.g. on achieving a Bachelor in a discipline or receiving a

training certificate). In this approach to HE, learning outcomes therefore include not only knowledge, but measurable skills and competencies.

3. Foster a learning outcomes approach in programme curricula design across all accredited HE institutions at a national level. A learning outcomes-focused curricula design ensures that faculty and institutions can assess the relevance of their programmes for the needs of societies and economies. Key strategies in establishing effective learning outcomes are: evaluative development of pedagogies and assessment methods; cohesive internal institutional programme organisation, design and implementation; and close consultation and collaboration with employers and industry leaders.
4. Establish clear guidelines and quality assurance mechanisms for cohesive credit transfer systems (CTS) at regional level. Existing ASEAN credit transfer systems can be brought together through referencing and quality assurance processes. The effectiveness of CTS is fully correlated with transparency tools such as qualification frameworks and quality assurance schemes that SHARE is developing in cooperation with key ASEAN institutions and organisations.
5. Establish tools, such as learning agreements or transcripts of records that will help in the accumulation and transfer of credit in a transparent way at national and regional levels.
6. Widen access to opportunities and create a more diverse and inclusive student body reflecting varied social and educational backgrounds at institutional, national and regional levels. ASEAN and SEAMEO should consider ways for a more inclusive policy in support of an ASEAN Scholarship Scheme that widens participation in mobility.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANAGERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) IN ASEAN

1. Establish the student experience as the core feature of university governance processes. In this student-centred approach, it is the

responsibility of senior university management to monitor, evaluate and continually strive to improve institutional processes and co-operation between its student body and faculty to ultimately ensure a quality education experience for every student.

2. Prioritise institutional and national strengths in developing comparability and the compatibility of learning outcomes and qualifications. Rather than encourage standardised duplication of curricula, HEIs should customise their niche offers, within the emergent regional HE space.
3. Elect student representatives as members of university committees and boards that make decisions impacting student experiences. Quality improves when students are part of the education process through their involvement in internal and external quality assurance process. Creating a student-centred approach and capturing student feedback co-opts students as stakeholders and empowers them in contributing to relevant and effective curricula and pedagogical methods.
4. Establish comprehensive institutional course catalogues and learning outcomes, so as to facilitate student and institutional access to mobility schemes across the ASEAN. In addition, the course prospectus should stipulate a range of information elements that will facilitate the choice and improve the trust of the students when applying to mobility schemes.
5. Create or adopt a set of mobility tools that embrace learning agreements, transcripts of records, and the delivery of certificates that document mobility achievements of students. Experience from the European Higher Education Area, where participating universities use such documents to record and monitor student achievements, will provide useful benchmarks, and SHARE aims at supporting HEIs by designing an ASEAN CTS handbook, developing templates, and by providing capacity building trainings.

6. Compliance with a regional mobility charter signals the commitment of HEIs to ensure that the learning gained by all students is of

quality and recognised across borders. SHARE is developing a draft mobility charter with ASEAN institutions and stakeholders.

The shift from content-based to learning outcomes based educational models, as well as the development of a participatory, student centred approach, is as cultural as it is technical, and will take time. Countries with less exposure to the internationalisation of higher education

and the proliferation of the learning outcomes approach will need greater attention and support, also from SHARE. Ultimately, the creation of a harmonised higher education area in ASEAN, in which credentials and programmes are mutually recognised, will allow ASEAN's economies to remain competitive, its knowledge societies to flourish, and its aspiration of a meaningful, people centred ASEAN Community to become a reality.

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SHARE, the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region, is a four-year initiative by the EU and ASEAN. Launched in Jakarta in May 2015, SHARE aims to support ASEAN in harmonising regional higher education by sharing European expertise. It does this through strengthening regional cooperation, enhancing the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education for institutions and students, and thereby contributing to a closer ASEAN community. SHARE is implemented by a consortium of Europe's major international education agencies, led by the British Council and comprised of Campus France, DAAD, EP-Nuffic, ENQA, and EUA. More information on SHARE at [www.share-asean.eu](http://www.share-asean.eu)