09/08/2023

**Submission on the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.**

Dear Members of the Education and Workforce Committee,

We, the executive of the Otago University Student’s Association, are writing to submit our views on the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. We believe that this Convention is of utmost significance in facilitating international cooperation and promoting equitable access to higher education opportunities worldwide. As a concerned citizen and advocate for education, we deeply appreciate the Committee's examination of this Convention and offer my insights to contribute to your examination process.

The UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, encompassing Sections III, IV, and V, fosters harmonised recognition practices and global mobility for students and professionals. Article III establishes fundamental principles of transparency, fairness, and non-discrimination, facilitating clear and accessible recognition processes. It empowers individuals with essential information to make informed decisions about their education and career paths. The principle of fairness ensures unbiased recognition decisions, promoting equal opportunities regardless of nationality or background. The Convention aims to create a level playing field for candidates worldwide, allowing them to fully utilise their skills and knowledge. Additionally, the Convention's commitment to eradicating fraudulent practices using contemporary technologies and networking is commendable. It addresses challenges posed by technological advancements while maintaining the integrity of recognised qualifications. These efforts contribute to a more equitable and reliable higher education recognition framework on a global scale.

Article III serves as the cornerstone of the Convention, establishing principles of transparency, fairness, and non-discrimination. These foundational tenets underpin the development of clear and accessible recognition processes. By empowering individuals with crucial information, the Convention enables informed decisions about education and career pathways. Fairness, central to this principle, ensures that recognition decisions remain unbiased, offering equal opportunities to candidates, regardless of their origin or background.

What makes the Convention particularly noteworthy is its emphasis on combatting fraudulent practices using contemporary technologies. This proactive approach not only addresses challenges posed by technological advancements but also safeguards the credibility and integrity of recognised qualifications. In a world where technology drives much of our education and professional landscape, such foresight is essential to ensure a reliable and equitable higher education recognition framework.

Digital advancements, such as digital credentials and blockchain-based verification, hold immense promise in expediting recognition processes. These technologies offer streamlined pathways that reduce the administrative burden on both applicants and recognition authorities. Such innovations align seamlessly with the evolving nature of education and the globalised workforce, fostering an agile and interconnected higher education ecosystem.

Article IV fosters inclusivity by recognising qualifications for higher education access in foreign State Parties and promoting academic mobility. It ensures equitable evaluation and acknowledges diverse learning pathways, accommodating modern educational practices. Similarly, Article V upholds equal opportunities for professionals by recognising higher-education qualifications acquired in other States Parties. It emphasises cross-border education and appeals mechanisms, enhancing fairness and transparency in the recognition process. Articles VI and VII address the recognition of partial studies, prior learning, and qualifications of refugees, empowering marginalised populations with equitable access to education and career prospects.

Articles IV and V of the Convention deserve special attention, as they align closely with our vision of promoting equity and access to higher education. These articles recognise diverse qualifications for higher education access and professional opportunities, transcending national borders. In an increasingly interconnected world, acknowledging qualifications acquired across boundaries is pivotal for both personal growth and international collaboration.

Articles VI and VII hold the potential to empower marginalised populations, including refugees and displaced persons, with equitable access to education and subsequent career prospects. In extending recognition to partial studies, prior learning, and qualifications acquired in diverse contexts, the Convention aligns with our commitment to providing pathways for education and development to those who need it most.

Article VIII's emphasis on transparent systems for describing qualifications and the significance of national information centres resonates deeply with our values. These components streamline the recognition process and provide essential information to both recognition authorities and individuals seeking recognition. In our view, accessible information is integral to creating a level playing field and promoting international collaboration. It highlights the importance of transparent systems for describing qualifications and the significance of national information centres, streamlining the recognition process, and providing essential information to stakeholders. The Convention's dedication to inclusivity and recognition of diverse qualifications promotes a globally interconnected and inclusive higher education ecosystem.

The Convention's focus on contemporary technologies also holds the promise of expediting recognition processes, which can be time-consuming and cumbersome in traditional settings. Harnessing digital advancements, such as digital credentials and blockchain-based verification, enables efficient and streamlined recognition procedures, reducing the administrative burden on both applicants and recognition authorities. This modern approach aligns with the evolving nature of education and the globalised workforce, fostering a more agile and interconnected higher education ecosystem. Furthermore, networking activities, as encouraged by the Convention, can play a crucial role in sharing best practices, exchanging information, and promoting mutual trust among State Parties. By engaging in collaborative efforts, recognition authorities can develop standardised evaluation methods and stay abreast of emerging trends in the education landscape. The collective sharing of knowledge and experiences ultimately strengthens the recognition mechanisms, leading to more robust and reliable outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

National information centres play a vital role in supporting recognition decisions by providing recognition authorities in different countries with accurate and relevant data about foreign qualifications. This access to information expedites recognition processes and reduces administrative burdens for both applicants and recognition authorities. The Convention encourages the use of contemporary technologies, such as online portals and digital databases, to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of information. This streamlined approach empowers individuals seeking recognition to make informed decisions about their education and career paths without delays. Moreover, educational institutions and recognition authorities benefit from this readily available information, ensuring fair and efficient recognition processes when assessing qualifications from other States Parties. The Convention's emphasis on accessible information fosters international collaboration and strengthens the recognition mechanisms worldwide.

The UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education is a significant instrument promoting education and international cooperation. Emphasising transparency, fairness, and non-discrimination, the Convention ensures equal opportunities for recognition regardless of nationality. Notably, it recognises non-traditional learning modes and cross-border education, embracing the evolving educational landscape. By facilitating international academic and professional mobility, the Convention fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and a global perspective on pressing issues. The Convention's commitment to combatting fraudulent practices using contemporary technologies ensures the integrity and credibility of recognised qualifications. Enshrining education as a global public good, the Convention underscores the shared responsibility of nations in achieving education-related Sustainable Development Goals. Through collaboration and mutual support, the Convention strives for educational excellence and equitable opportunities for all.

We express our support for the Convention and urge the Education and Workforce Committee to consider the Convention's merits in shaping educational policies and practices in our country. We hope our submission will aid the Committee's examination process and contribute to the adoption of policies that align with the principles and objectives outlined in this essential international agreement.

Thank you for considering our submission. Please feel free to reach out if you require any further information or clarification.

Ngā mihi,

OUSA Executive