



SUMMARY REPORT

THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT MOBILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG ASEAN PLUS THREE COUNTRIES (8TH APTWG)

12 November 2020

Online and Hanoi, Viet Nam

INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministry of Education and Training Viet Nam hosted the 8th Meeting of the Working Group on Student Mobility and Quality Assurance of Higher Education Among ASEAN Plus Three Countries (APTWG) on 12 November 2020 via videoconference. Participating were representatives from the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Countries and the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC). Representatives from the following partner institutions also participated:

- a. ASEAN University Network (AUN) Secretariat;
- b. AUN-ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS) Secretariat;
- c. ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN);
- d. ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (AQRF) Committee; and
- e. Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED).

2. The list of participants and meeting agenda are available as **ANNEX 1 and 2**, respectively.

HIGHLIGHTS

3. H.E. Dr. Nguyen Van Phuc, Deputy Minister of Education of Viet Nam delivered opening remarks. He highlighted the importance of further promoting student exchanges, mobility and quality assurance, with a view to develop resilient ASEAN human resources that meet the demand of the labour market. He hoped that the meeting will serve as an effective platform for the APT countries to share best practices on COVID-19 responses in the higher education sector, as well as a venue to discuss future cooperation on student mobility and quality assurance in the new normal.

4. Dr. Pham Quang Hung, Director General of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Education and Training of Viet Nam, Mr. Sato Kuniaki, Chief Director for University Reform of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan and Prof. Kitamura Yuto, Associate Professor of Graduate School of Education, the University of Tokyo assumed the Chairmanship and Co-Chairmanship of the APTWG, respectively.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Higher Education

5. The APT countries delivered presentations on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the higher education sector and their corresponding policy responses. The presentations provided information on the following aspects: (i) entry restrictions for foreign nationals; (ii) modalities of instruction; (iii) countermeasures implemented by governments and higher education institutions on international student mobility; and (iv) initiatives for a new and better normal in international higher education. The full presentations are attached as annex:

- a. Brunei Darussalam – **ANNEX 3**
- b. Cambodia – **ANNEX 4**
- c. Indonesia – **ANNEX 5**
- d. Lao PDR – **ANNEX 6**
- e. Malaysia – **ANNEX 7**
- f. Myanmar – **ANNEX 8**
- g. Philippines – **ANNEX 9**
- h. Singapore – **ANNEX 10**
- i. Thailand – **ANNEX 11**
- j. Viet Nam – **ANNEX 12**
- k. Japan – **ANNEX 13**
- l. Republic of Korea – **ANNEX 14**

6. The Meeting agreed with the recommendation put forward by Japan to disseminate to the general public the presentations delivered by APT countries, specifically by publishing them on the ASEAN website. As there was no representative present from the Philippines, the ASEAN Secretariat was tasked to request the Philippines' concurrence in regard to making their country presentation publicly available. The ASEAN Secretariat was also requested to coordinate closely with member states on the finalisation and publication of presentations.

Action by: ASEAN Secretariat

Results of the Survey on the Availability of Information Online to Promote Mobility of Higher Education in the ASEAN Plus Three Countries

7. As agreed during the 7th APTWG held in September 2019, the validity and relevance of draft outcome documents in regard to the availability of information online to promote mobility of higher education in the APT countries shall be tested through a survey of both teaching and non-teaching staff as well as students of higher education institutions in the region.

8. In this regard, Japan updated the Meeting on the results of the Survey on the Availability of Information Online to Promote Mobility of Higher Education in the APT countries. The said survey sought to solicit feedback on the draft Guide on the Availability of Information Online (hereinafter will be referred to as the Guide). The questionnaire was

developed by a task force, comprising members from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the ASEAN Secretariat. The survey revealed that 56% of the respondents found the Guide relevant and useful. Amongst the suggestions provided by the survey respondents are the following: (i) enhancing the visual design of the Guide, i.e. utilising less text, and improving the layout and font selection; (ii) providing further information on the benefits of studying abroad; and (iii) suggesting additional points for the checklist. Japan, on behalf of the task force, subsequently presented a revised Guide, which had been amended in light of feedback received from the survey respondents. The finalised Guide will be submitted to SOM-ED+3 and APT EMM for approval. The presentation on the detailed survey results and the revised Guide is attached as **ANNEX 15**.

9. Singapore expressed appreciation to the task force for its efforts to develop the Guide. In addition, Singapore noted that the checklists presented by Japan already contain comprehensive information, and therefore there is no need to add or remove any items from the checklist.

10. In regard to entrance examination information, which was cited by respondents as an item to be added to the checklist, Singapore recommended to include general information such as examination modalities and process rather than providing specific information related to examination questions and pass rates. Malaysia and Viet Nam concurred with Singapore on this recommendation. The Meeting agreed to revise the item on entrance examination information, in line with the recommendation provided by Singapore.

11. Further, Viet Nam also proposed to present the objectives of the Guide on its front page, with a view to assist readers in better understanding the purpose of the Guide. Viet Nam likewise encouraged member states to upload the Guide to websites dedicated to international students, if available. The Meeting noted the inputs from Viet Nam and agreed to revise the Guide accordingly.

12. The ASEAN Secretariat seconded Singapore's observation regarding the extensive scope of the Guide and commended the work of the task force in this regard. Additionally, the ASEAN Secretariat echoed the feedback from the survey respondents to enhance the Guide's visual presentation, particularly its layout and design. The Meeting tasked the ASEAN Secretariat to explore the possibility of tapping into its internal human resources to improve the Guide's layout and design.

13. Malaysia requested for a copy of the complete dataset on the results of the survey. The Meeting agreed to accommodate this request. The Meeting likewise agreed to provide the full dataset to member states, upon request.

14. Japan proposed for the Guide to be shared widely with universities for piloting, monitoring and evaluation. The feedback obtained from the universities will be subsequently utilised to finalise the Guide. The consolidated feedback from member states are expected to be submitted to the APTWG two to three months prior to the convening of the next APTWG Meeting and will be presented at the Meeting.

15. Indonesia expressed support for Japan's proposal and suggested that further promotion and dissemination of the guide also be done through the AUN-ACTS. Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and ROK also seconded Japan's proposal. The Meeting moved to approve the dissemination Guide to universities for piloting.

16. Recognising the important role of the Guide to support the internationalisation of higher education institutions, Cambodia underscored their intention to increase the numbers of international students in Cambodia. In this regard, Cambodia suggested to establish a platform for the sharing of information and best practices amongst universities in the APT region. In response, the Chair recommended for this proposed platform to be discussed under Agenda Item 9: Proposal on the Future Work of the APTWG, since the initiative will involve the promotion information sharing amongst APT countries in general.

Action by: APTWG Task Force and ASEAN Secretariat

Updates on the CAMPUS Asia Programme

17. The Collective Action for Mobility Programme of University Students in Asia (CAMPUS) Asia was established through a trilateral agreement amongst China, Japan and ROK in 2010. It is a cross-border student mobility programme that aims to strengthen networks amongst academic institutions of higher education in Asia through the establishment of consortia. The programme promotes student exchanges and exchange programmes.

18. ROK briefed the meeting on the overview, history, and outcomes of the CAMPUS Asia programme, as well as future plans to include ASEAN Member States in Mode 3. The three (3) types of student exchange offered by the programme include double degree courses, semester exchanges, and short-term exchanges.

19. ROK further explained that the proposed plan for Mode 3 of the CAMPUS Asia will involve: (i) expansion of participating countries to include ASEAN Member States, (ii) possible conduct of student exchanges through online and blended learning courses to adapt to the COVID-19 situation, as well as (iii) the development of a scholarship scheme within the programme. These details are still tentative and will be further discussed during the 8th Meeting of the Korea-China-Japan Committee for Promoting Exchange Cooperation among Universities. The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 16**.

20. Following the presentation, Japan expressed appreciation to China and ROK for their continued collaboration on the CAMPUS Asia programme. Japan underlined the important role of CAMPUS Asia in promoting the harmonisation of higher education, with a view to promote student mobility in the region. Japan likewise underscored the importance of collaboration with ASEAN Member States in order to effectively implement the programme, since it will support the establishment of a higher education common space in the region.

21. In response to queries from Singapore, ROK and Japan provided the following clarification:

- a. Difference between pilot and full-fledged phase: There is no significant difference in terms of the format and activities of both phases;
- b. Challenges faced by Plus Three Countries in implementing the programme: The main challenges centred on variations in terms of academic regulations and the academic calendar in the Plus Three Countries, as well as the selection process of the consortia;
- c. Definition of consortium: In the CAMPUS Asia programme, each consortium is an association of universities from the member countries. Currently, each consortium in CAMPUS Asia consists of one (1) university from each of the Plus Three countries. Should the expansion of the programme materialise, each consortium shall comprise universities from both Plus Three countries and ASEAN Member States.

22. Considering the challenges faced by Plus Three Countries in implementing the Campus Asia programme specifically on the variance in academic regulations and calendar for formal degree programmes, Singapore suggested that the expansion of the programme to interested ASEAN member states could be done gradually by starting with student exchanges rather than degree programmes. Japan clarified that whilst double degree courses is one of the components of CAMPUS Asia, the implementation of these courses by all consortia is not mandatory.

Proposal of the Future Work of the APTWG

23. Japan presented a proposal on *Setting Up Quality Assurance Architecture in Future International Education in Asia*, which aims to promote coherence amongst higher education institutions across APTWG countries, as well as ensure quality assurance. Japan introduced the Competence/Learning Outcome approach, more widely known as the TUNING project, that seeks to streamline the structure of curricula by breaking down an education programme into competencies or learning outcomes. Further, Japan underscored that this approach is compatible with distance learning and can be applied to various higher education institutions across the region.

24. In implementing the approach, the proposed activities under the project would entail the following: (i) collecting and examining good practices and challenges on online/blended/face-to-face learning modalities from a quality assurance perspective; (ii) a feasibility study to identify relevant competencies or learning outcomes in different subject areas; and (iii) developing reports to document the findings of the study. More details are available in the presentation attached as **ANNEX 17**.

25. ROK also presented a proposal on the *International Provision for New Modes of Higher Education in the APT Region*. The proposal seeks to facilitate new modes of cooperation in higher education in the region, particularly in light of the difficulties to implement physical student mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

26. Concretely, ROK proposed for the development of APT Joint Guidelines for New Forms of Mobility in Higher Education which aim to: (i) increase mutual understanding by sharing experiences around online education in the APT region; (ii) establish an institutional

foundation to enable new forms of higher education cooperation in the APT region; and (iii) ensure students' broader education opportunities and fair recognition of their international education experience. To this end, the possible expected outcomes include the following: (i) building a common perception towards the new forms of transnational higher education; (ii) identification of different types of higher education cooperation (e.g. face-to-face, non-contact, blended education, etc.); (iii) establishing requirements to ensure the quality of higher education; (iv) exchanging information around relevant practices and policies in online education; and ultimately (v) development of new guidelines on the above-mentioned issues and topics. ROK proposed to convene an expert meeting in February 2021 to further discuss the proposed development of these guidelines. The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 17**.

27. In response to the proposal presented by Japan, the AUN Secretariat updated the Meeting on the completion of their three-year joint project with the Tuning Academy on curriculum development and management. This project also covered the development of learning outcome frameworks on three (3) subject areas, namely medicine, civil engineering, and teacher education. This joint initiative resulted in three (3) publications on the said learning outcome frameworks. The AUN Secretariat likewise informed the Meeting regarding another three-year project with the Tuning Academy Groningen, which will focus on the assessment of learning outcomes on the above-mentioned subject areas. The upcoming project will be funded by the European Union and is planned for implementation in 2021. Following the sharing of updates by the AUN Secretariat, Japan expressed hope that the future work of the APTWG could be aligned with this new project with Tuning Academy.

28. In response to Japan's proposal, Singapore highlighted to the meeting that as most countries were currently more concerned about how to restore student mobility and exchanges, and resume normalcy, it may be useful for the APTWG to continue its focus on student mobility. The use of "Quality Assurance of Higher Education among APT countries" as a tagline for the APTWG's future work suggest that the APTWG would be pivoting its focus to Quality Assurance and also may not fully reflect the group's efforts and achievements in the other pillar on student mobility. Hence, Singapore suggested that the working group could possibly focus on the following activities:

- (i) collecting, examining, and developing reports on good practices and challenges on online/blended/face-to-face learning modalities from a quality assurance viewpoint;
- (ii) exchanging information around relevant practices and policies in online education; and
- (iii) developing APT Joint Guidelines for New forms of Mobility in Higher Education, (hereinafter referred to as APT Joint Guidelines).

Singapore further suggested that the development of the APT Joint Guidelines could build upon the APT Guidelines on Student Exchange and Mobility, which was developed by APTWG in 2015. The previous guidelines can be adjusted as needed, especially in light of COVID-19 which had necessitated new forms of student exchanges and virtual learning.

29. In regard to the plan to conduct a feasibility study to identify relevant competencies or learning outcomes in subject areas (hereinafter referred to as Feasibility Study), Singapore expressed concerns about the availability of resources and capacity to implement the project

at this point in time, considering the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Cambodia seconded Singapore's concerns, and proposed for the future work of the APTWG to focus on exchanging good practices and challenges related to teaching approaches in light of the current pandemic. Viet Nam concurred with the views of Singapore and Cambodia, and suggested for the conclusions and recommendations of the Feasibility Study to be piloted to assess their effectiveness.

30. On the proposal to collect, examine, and develop reports on good practices and challenges on online/blended/face-to-face learning modalities from a quality assurance perspective, Cambodia also suggested for the scope to not only focus on quality assurance, but to also include the topic of Qualification Reference Framework.

31. Thailand stressed the significant role of student mobility programmes in providing students with learning experience acquired outside of the classroom. In this regard, Thailand recommended for the Joint Guidelines to likewise focus on activities beyond the classroom setting, such as internships and research. Indonesia seconded the views of Thailand regarding the importance of learning experience obtained outside the classroom. Indonesia further highlighted that collaboration between international students in implementing projects is one of the good practices in strengthening people-to-people engagement.

32. Additionally, Indonesia identified the Bologna Process implemented in Europe as a best practice that the APTWG could refer to in terms of promoting coherence amongst the diverse education systems in the region. Indonesia also suggested to evaluate the accreditation systems of APT member countries, with a view to help assess the compatibility of higher education qualifications across the APT region.

33. In light of the importance of promoting information sharing between universities in APT countries, Viet Nam proposed to establish an online platform for this purpose.

34. ROK acknowledged the inputs provided by ASEAN Member States and proposed to conduct further discussions on the scope of the Joint Guidelines. ROK suggested for these discussions to be carried out during the expert meeting to be convened in 2021.

35. The meeting agreed to further discuss the direction on the future work of APTWG, which includes the following items proposed by Japan and ROK :

- (i) collecting, examining, and developing reports on good practices and challenges on online/blended/face-to-face learning modalities from a quality assurance viewpoint;
- (ii) conducting feasibility study of identifying relevant competencies or learning outcomes in subject areas;
- (iii) exchanging information around relevant practices and policies in online education; and
- (iv) developing APT Joint Guidelines for New forms of Mobility in Higher Education, (hereinafter referred to as APT Joint Guidelines).

36. The Meeting agreed to convene an expert meeting in 2021, which will be focusing on the development of the the APT Joint Guidelines. As suggested by the Chair, ROK will lead the work on item (iii) and (iv), through the expert meeting. Each APT member country

will be invited to nominate one (1) expert to join the expert meeting. Further details regarding the expert meeting will be provided by ROK in due course. The Meeting also agreed that Japan will lead the work on item (i) and (ii), while consulting the Quality Assurance institutions of APT member countries, with regard to a view to explore the possibility to conduct the Feasibility Study.

Updates, Current Issues and Upcoming Activities of APTWG Members and Participating Organisations

37. ROK acknowledged the inputs provided by ASEAN Member States and proposed to conduct further discussions on the future work of APTWG, including the scope of the Joint Guidelines. ROK suggested for these discussions to be carried out during the expert meeting to be convened in 2021.

38. The Meeting agreed for the future work of the APTWG and the development of the Joint Guidelines to be discussed in depth at the expert meeting in 2021. Each APT member country will be invited to nominate one (1) expert to join the expert meeting. Further details regarding the expert meeting will be provided by ROK in due course. As suggested by the Chair, the Meeting also agreed to consult the Quality Assurance institutions of APT member countries, with a view to explore the possibility to conduct the Feasibility Study.

Updates, Current Issues and Upcoming Activities of APTWG Members and Participating Organisations

39. The AUN-ACTS Secretariat delivered a presentation on the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the AUN-ACTS mobility programme. The number of mobility activities in 2020 decreased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The AUN-ACTS Secretariat also informed the Meeting on the collaboration between AUN-ACTS and the European Union Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (SHARE) to develop a single pan-ASEAN credit transfer system and integrate the AUN-ACTS with the SHARE ASEAN-EU Credit Transfer System (AECTS). The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 18**.

40. Japan updated the Meeting on the implementation of projects and activities that were led by Japan in support of the APT Plan of Action (POA) on Education 2018-2025, which include: (i) Network of 40 Engineering Universities in ASEAN and Japan; (ii) Collaborative Education Programme (CEP); (iii) Study in Japan Global Network Project; and (iv) Study in Japan Fairs in APT Countries. The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 19**.

41. ROK briefed the Meeting on the projects and activities led by ROK in support of the APT POA on Education 2018-2025, which include the Global Korea Scholarship and Higher Education for ASEAN Talents. The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 20**.

42. AQAN delivered a briefing on its current and upcoming activities. AQAN also updated the Meeting on the COVID-19 response efforts of quality assurance institutions in Malaysia and the Philippines. The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 21**.

43. SEAMEO RIHED provided updates to the Meeting on the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme and other key activities. SEAMEO RIHED highlighted the effects of COVID-19 on the implementation of these initiatives. The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 22.**

44. Although no representative from the Philippines was able to attend the Meeting, their presentation on Projects and Activities in Support of the APT POA on Education 2018-2025 is available as **ANNEX 23.**

45. The ASEAN Secretariat updated the meeting on the higher education priorities, projects, and activities proposed for the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025. In the zero draft Work Plan, higher education is a strategic priority to be covered under Outcome 3: *Enhanced regional capacities in Higher Education as part of lifelong learning provision, including the harmonisation of ASEAN higher education.* The proposed outputs include:

- a. Strengthened role of higher education Institutions in lifelong learning through the provision of flexible, innovative, multi-disciplinary, cross-border education and research collaboration; and
- b. Sustained and strengthened ASEAN capacity in higher education harmonisation through strategies, mechanisms, and scholarship provision.

The full presentation is available as **ANNEX 24.**

46. To conclude the Meeting, Japan stressed the importance of supporting higher education students in the region through the work of the APTWG. Japan also thanked ROK for their efforts to conceptualise future activities, and extended appreciation to ASEAN Member States for their continued cooperation and commitment to the Working Group.

47. Viet Nam brought the Meeting to a close by highlighting the key outcomes of the discussions. Viet Nam thanked Japan as Co-Chair and commended the APT member countries for their valuable contribution to the Meeting. The Meeting was then declared adjourned.
