

## LAB 1 – Inclusive Admissions & Recognition

### Nexus 3.0 Input

#### 1. Background

Higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly face challenges in recognizing prior learning when students cannot provide complete academic documentation. This situation frequently affects **forcibly displaced learners**, whose diplomas, transcripts or academic records may be lost, destroyed, or inaccessible due to conflict and displacement.

However, this issue extends beyond refugee contexts. With growing **international education mobility**, joint degrees, online learning, and micro-credentials, higher education institutions are facing increasing complexity in verifying and interpreting academic records across systems.

International frameworks such as the **Lisbon Recognition Convention** and the **UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education** already support flexible recognition approaches when documentation is incomplete. Yet universities often lack **practical tools and shared mechanisms** to implement these principles efficiently.

At the same time, developments in **digital credentials, secure academic identity systems, and AI-assisted recognition tools** create new opportunities to strengthen recognition processes while maintaining academic standards.

#### 2. Key Challenges

- Missing or incomplete academic documentation
- Slow and complex verification of international credentials
- Fragmented learning records across institutions and countries
- Administrative pressure on admissions systems
- Concerns regarding document authenticity

While these challenges affect displaced learners most severely, they increasingly affect **all internationally mobile students**.

### 3. Possible Directions for Solutions

Potential approaches to strengthen recognition systems include:

- **Verifiable digital credentials** issued by educational institutions
- **Digital academic wallets or lockers** allowing students to securely store and share learning records
- **AI-supported tools** assisting credential interpretation and qualification mapping
- **Evidence-based admissions models** combining documentation, interviews and competency assessment
- **Collaboration between HEIs and recognition agencies**

These tools would **support HEIs in assessing evidence more efficiently**, while recognition decisions remain under academic responsibility.

### 4. Proposal for Discussion

A possible next step could be the development of a **pilot initiative focused on forcibly displaced learners**, who face the most acute barriers in providing verifiable academic documentation.

The pilot could explore the creation of a **Higher Education Academic Credential Locker or “Academic Passport”**, allowing students to securely store and share their academic records across institutions and borders.

Such a system could include:

- a **secure digital credential locker** where students store diplomas, transcripts and certificates
- **digitally verifiable credentials** issued by HEIs
- **AI-supported tools** assisting document interpretation and qualification mapping
- **flexible recognition procedures** combining available documentation, interviews, and competency assessments.

HEIs and recognition agencies could access a **structured academic profile** to support faster and more transparent admissions decisions.

A pilot focusing on displaced learners would allow institutions to test these tools in contexts where recognition challenges are most acute. If successful, the model could later **scale to support broader international education mobility**, benefiting all students studying across borders.

*Nexus 3.0 is currently looking for partners to explore together initiatives linking digital credential systems, flexible recognition models, and complementary pathways to higher education for displaced learners*