



ECTS implementation: guidelines, problems and solutions

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The benefits of ECTS credits

- ◆ ECTS was created to enhance the transparency of study programmes and facilitate recognition
- ◆ Can facilitate the programme design and development,
- ◆ It provides a common instrument for higher education institutions and students, it meets the concept of credits
- ◆ ECTS serves for both mobile and non-mobile students as it supports inter-institutional co-operation
- ◆ Through ECTS the programmes can be made more flexible, it supports learner centred approach
- ◆ ECTS is a key element of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area



ECTS

- ◆ A student - centred way of describing learning by attaching credits to learning outcomes, based on the student workload needed to achieve them



Key questions to be answered:

- ◆ What are the advantages for the learner of ECTS?
- ◆ How do you use credits for accumulation and transfer?
- ◆ What is the link between ECTS credits and Workload?
- ◆ Are learning outcomes directly related to activities and ECTS credits?
- ◆ How do you decide how many credits a degree programme should have? How do you assign credits to different modules?



Key Features

- ◆ ECTS are based on the workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes
- ◆ Learning outcomes describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning
- ◆ Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study, examinations)
- ◆ 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of a formal learning (academic year)
- ◆ Credits are allocated to the entire programme as well as to their components (modules, course units, dissertation, work placements, lab work)
- ◆ Credits awarded in one programme may be transferred into another programme



Descriptors and time

- ◆ Professional profile
- ◆ Programme profile related to Dublin descriptors, European Qualification Framework
- ◆ Level descriptors (cycles may have levels to show progression)
- ◆ Course descriptors



Learning outcomes

- ◆ Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning
- ◆ They are building blocks of transparent and student-centred qualifications systems
- ◆ Course should be compared on the basis of learning outcomes



Credits cover:

- ◆ All components of a study programme: attending lectures, seminars, work placements, dissertations, projects, lab works, and self study
- ◆ Credits are allocated after successful assessment, recognition or validation of learning outcomes

Workload



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Workload

- ◆ Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and **exams**)
- ◆ On average from 1500-1800 hours per academic year, one credit corresponds to 25-30 hours of work



Credit allocation

- ◆ 60 credits are allocated to the workload of a full time academic year, 30 credits are normally allocated to a semester and 20 credits to a trimester. Qualifications which have formal programmes lasting four academic years are allocated 240 ECTS credits.



Credit allocation

Decision is taken by competent authorities
(institution issuing diploma)

Key documents: Course Catalogue, Learning
agreement, Transcript of Records

Credits are attached to learning outcomes at
all levels of education and training

In HE to all 3 cycles- bachelor, master,
doctorate and to all levels within cycles



Exceptions

Individual students may achieve fewer credits in a year due to absence, failure or a deliberate choice to study part time. Other students may achieve more than 60 credits- in exceptionally long programmes (up to 90 credits in 12 months). Exceptional length must be explained in the Course Catalogue.




Credit accumulation and transfer

For national students it is a tool for credit accumulation. For international activities it is a tool for credit transfer and study period recognition, in case of agreed Learning agreement and achieved LO recognition should be automatic.

- ◆ When used as transfer, credits facilitate mobility within one institution or one country, from institution to institution, or from one country to country, and between different educational sectors and contexts of learning
- ◆ Allows flexibility, diverse learning paths
- ◆ ECTS credits do not express the level of expected LO (other tools are used such as level descriptors)

Application of ECTS



Accumulation	Elements	Documents
a process of collecting credits awarded for achieving LO of educational components or other learning activities	Credits from students Learning outcomes and student workload, Institutional grading, National QF level descriptors	Course catalogue, Institutional regulations on credit allocation, institutional regulations on students' progress, institutional application form,, Transcript of Records, DS

Transfer

Transfer	Elements	Documents
The process of having credits awarded in one context recognised in another context for purposes of obtaining a qualification	Credits for agreed Learning outcomes, Institutional grading, ECTS grading table	Course catalogue, ECTS application form, ECTS Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records Institutional regulations on recognition Diploma Supplement



Informal/ Experiential learning

Informal learning	Elements	Documents
The process through which an institution certifies that the LO achieved and assessed in another context (non formal or informal satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification	credits from Learning outcomes only	regional recognition agreements, sectoral recognition agreements, Institutional recognition agreements, application form, applicant's portfolio

Recognition

Recognition	Elements	Documents
A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of the foreign educational qualification with the view to access educational and employment activities	Credits from LO, NQF level descriptors, Dublin descriptors	Diploma Supplement, National Qualification Framework, European Qualification Framework Recognition procedures of study abroad




Quality Assurance

QA	Elements	Documents
The process or set of processes adopted nationally and institutionally to ensure the quality of educational programmes and qualification awarded	Credits from Learning outcomes, student workload National QF level descriptors	Institutional regulation, regulations on credit allocation, national regulations and requirements for degrees, institutional regulations on degrees



Problems for recognition and ECTS use

- ◆ In some cases still partial recognition
- ◆ Not recognized the study year abroad
- ◆ Recognition by content, matching the content of study period but not based on LO and workload
- ◆ Mobility is highly valued however not enough trust built between partners (Why sign agreement if you do not trust your partners?)
- ◆ Recognition of prior experiential learning still needs to be addressed in a proper way – a task for the future
- ◆ A complicated issue in case of Joint degree programmes (programme design level and credit allocation)



ECTS credits , Learning outcomes and workload

- ◆ LO constitute the qualitative element of ECTS, focus on learner's behaviour, can be measurable, assessed
- ◆ LO conveys to the student what is to be accomplished
- ◆ Workload is time based, it is the quantity of student work of a typical student. It is constant: 40 hours a week to achieve LO.
- ◆ LO serve the basis for defining suitable learning activities. In ECTS the estimation of time embraces required activities. It must not be limited to contact hours or guided learning activities
- ◆ Checking/testing of estimated workload is needed; it leads to further adjustment of the workload and/or the type of educational activities if it does not match the actual workload (Tuning methodology)



ECTS credits and levels

- ◆ A level descriptor is a statement that provides an indication of the depth and extent of learning expected at a specific stage in a programme (Tuning methodology)
- ◆ ECTS credits apply to levels 5,6 and 7 of EQF for the sector of HE
- ◆ Qualification levels are based on descriptors, generic statements of LO. Levels express differences in advancement/ specialization/complexity of LO
- ◆ Level descriptors are used in curriculum design, assignment of credits



Problems

- ◆ Terms
- ◆ ECTS and levels
- ◆ ECTS and placements
- ◆ Can ECTS be used as a tool in non formal learning? (depends on many factors, legislation)
- ◆ Credit accumulation
- ◆ Recognition procedures not well established and understood by academic staff and administrators
- ◆ ECTS and Life Long Learning
- ◆ Support structures for students and academic staff not fully functioning



ECTS credits and LLL

- ◆ ECTS can be used for accumulation, transfer and recognition of prior learning
- ◆ The same credits should be awarded for formal and non formal way of studies
- ◆ Only the degree awarding higher educational institution has the right to assess the prior leaning LO and award credits
- ◆ ECTS transfer and accumulation are facilitated by the use of Course Catalogue, Student application form, Learning agreement, Transcript of Records



THANK YOU !

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