

# Curricula design by students – How can Bologna empower flexible learning?

By The European  
Students Union

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AG2 L&T  
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CONGREGATIO  
DE INSTITUTIONE CATHOLICA  
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# Student involvement in Curriculum design – ideas and questions.

Melanie Rosenbaum

Congregation for Catholic Education of the Holy See

# Student-centered learning

- Puts the focus on the individual learners,
- including „effective support and guidance structures ... leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths“ (Leuven Communiqué 2009)

# Students should have Control Over their Learning

Students should be given the opportunity to be involved in the design of courses, curricula and their evaluation.

Students should be seen as active partners who have a stake in the way that higher education functions. **The best way to ensure that learning focuses more on students is by engaging students themselves in how their learning should be shaped.**

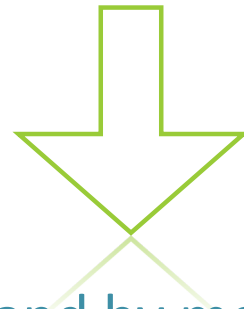
# The choice

## **Choice is Central to Effective Learning**

Students like to learn different things and hence any offer should involve a reasonable amount of choice. Learning can be organised in liberal formats, such as at colleges of liberal arts or choice can be offered in a more traditional, disciplinary style

# The choice

SCL incorporates the idea that **students have a choice** in what to study and how to study



Use of credits (primarily ECTS) and by means of modularisation provide an institutional structure that allows students an element of choice in what to study

# Learning outcomes

A growing practice of writing learning outcomes focusing on **what the student will be able to do**, rather than on the content being covered by the teacher.

This practice helps to shift the **emphasis onto the learner**.

This is an **emphasis on process and competence**, rather than on subject content.

# institutional policy

An **institutional policy** for the **identification, use and communication** of learning outcomes by all teachers and across all courses helps to ensure that there is a **focus on the needs of students** across all courses at the early stage of curriculum design

learning outcomes should be **specifically assessed** and that **feedback is provided to students** in a way that shows students the importance of the learning process undertaken by them



# Learning Outcomes

Enable students to understand what is expected of them and what they have achieved;

Are to define the essential material (core) in a unit or module;

Should define the totality of the material that the learner will know or be able to do on completing the unit;

Define what can be assessed by whatever means.

# Curricular design

Curricular design is central both to the organisation of learning and to the methods by which teaching can take place in order to enhance learning.

# Room for electives (I)

- Learning activities and individual study that has the individual student achieve the learning outcomes
- General enough to permit to take full advantage of all the possible forms of learning and teaching, and not prohibiting concrete emphasis on individual subjects
- Weighing of individual subjects (workload) placed into the discretion of the individual institution
- But: educational offer must remain sustainable and meet the need of students and their societies, including being of high quality

## Room for electives (II)

- „obligatory electives“?
- Few and determined options?
- Large ECTS ranges?
- Free choice off whole Academic offer?
- Individual(istic) <> employability

# Independence and Responsibility in Learning

Students are more independent and adaptable to life after higher education. The independence of students enables them to learn more effectively and to gain other skills such as teamwork, effective written and verbal communication, prioritisation of tasks and critical analysis. In turn, students can develop transferable skills and would be able to work more effectively in their careers and lives in general.

# Student representation

The disturbing finding is that the situation is by far the worst at programme level where students are supposed to participate in co-creating the curriculum - only 36% of the students' unions (15 out of 43) reported that their students are equal partners at this level.

This is thoroughly disappointing both in relative terms, considering that representation improves at higher levels of governances, and in absolute terms of ensuring an equal student partnership in modern higher education as the current state is not even close to where we would want to be in 2018.

# Implementation of student-participation

- Shape study path by choosing electives (individual perspective)
- Shape the curriculum itself (faculty/institution level), using the principles widely used for internal Quality Assurance!
  - Conversations with students → Committees → points of action
  - Follow up committee reports → upscaling/faculty level
  - Implementation conversations → Committees → upscaling revisedly/again to faculty or even institution level
  - Question of who oversees implementation/accountability?

# Curriculum design checklist

Are students consulted on curriculum content?

Are students consulted when learning outcomes are designed?

Are student needs and the diversity of the relevant student group considered when designing learning outcomes?

Are students informed on the intended learning outcomes before they start a course or programme component?

Are ECTS credits used co-related with defined learning outcomes?

Are credits transferable between courses and institutions?

Are credits measured based on student workload, independent of contact hours?

Are students awarded credits for activities that help them attain intended learning outcomes if conducted outside the institution?

Are extra-curricular activities of students accepted and recognised as an essential part of the learning experience?



# Recommendations for AG2

Students' consulted and involved in the design of curricula/LO on early stage

Flexible choice within curricula - elective courses

Feedback collected, discussed and improvements applied

ECTS system has to work

Learning outcomes design

Extra-curricular activities, recognition of credits, transferable credits

# Implementation of student-participation within curriculum design – possibilities?

Where could one set incentives for government implementation? Possible areas seem to be:

- Guidelines on student-centered learning (reprise of 2009)
- Guidelines on student-participation, inspired by student involvement in internal Quality Assurance
- Implementation mechanisms and accountability standards and verification:
  - Reference to be inserted into Communiqué text!
  - Inclusion into Bologna Implementation Report of criteria/indicators?
  - Attribution of follow up for accountability and implementation to existing bodies? To whom?
  - Or even creation of possible bodies for accountability and implementation?



Final comments?

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THANK YOU!

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