



*Meeting of the Bologna Peer Support Group:
Qualifications Frameworks and ECTS*

Implementation of the ECTS Users' Guide

Maria Sticchi Damiani

Helsinki, 15 January 2019



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Background

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

- *was originally developed within the European Union ,*
- *was formally adopted as a national credit system by the countries joining the European Higher Education Area.*

The new ECTS Users' Guide

- *was adopted by the EHEA Ministers in 2015,*
- *illustrates how to implement the ECTS system in EHEA Institutions.*

Is national legislation in each country in line with the new ECTS Guide?



Objectives

Based on its principles and structure, ECTS is intended to:

- 1. implement a learner-centred approach in designing and delivering study programmes;*
- 2. make study programmes fully transparent ;*
- 3. ensure the recognition of the learning achievements of mobile students.*



1. Implementation of a learner-centred approach in designing and delivering study programs

Study programmes are designed in ECTS credits by using two basic concepts:

- *defined learning outcomes,*
“statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process”;

- *estimated learning time (workload),*
“the time the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments”.





Study programmes designed in credits are delivered by ensuring that:

- *teaching/learning and assessment activities in all components are fully consistent with the credits allocated, i.e., with the learning outcomes to be achieved and the learning time allocated to achieve them;*
- *flexible learning paths can accommodate students' different learning needs and styles*





In operational terms

When designing a study programme,

ECTS credits are allocated

- *first, to the whole programme on the basis of the general learning outcomes defined for it,*
- *then, to its single educational components according to the estimated workload required to achieve the learning outcomes defined for each of them.*

Initial credit allocation is regularly monitored and revised.

When delivering a programme,

a constructive alignment is constantly pursued in the classroom between

the defined learning outcomes and the teaching/assessment methods used





In some HE systems, using ECTS credits for curriculum design and delivery implies a radical shift in focus:

- *from teaching inputs to learning outcomes*
- *from teaching hours to learning time*
- *from knowledge only to knowledge, skills and competences.*

This shift requires a deep cultural change in teaching practice and may take some time.

Good practice shows that such change can be encouraged and accelerated by international exchanges, national guidelines, institutional monitoring and discussion.





2. Transparency of study programs

All study programs and single teaching/learning units are described in a standard format in the ECTS Course Catalogue. This information is made available to national and international students both in the national and in a widely used international language.

In operational terms

When producing its own Course Catalogue, each institution, regardless of its size, has to formulate and translate both the general information referring to its national system and the specific information concerning its specific programs.





Especially for smaller institutions, scarce human or financial resources may be a serious obstacle to the production of a Course Catalogue and often affect its quality.

Good practice shows that work can be saved and quality improved if national guidelines facilitate the process by providing agreed options in two languages for the standard features of the national system, and examples of good practice for the more specific sections.





3. Recognition of the learning achievements of mobile students

All credits gained in a period of study abroad are fully recognized and the grades converted by using:

- *ECTS recognition procedures*
- *the ECTS tools , such as the Learning Agreement, the Transcript of Records and the Grade distribution table*

In operational terms

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



When participating in the Erasmus+ mobility programme

- 1. The period of study abroad is planned by the home institution with the mobile student, and a Learning Agreement is signed before departure, aiming at:*
 - the achievement of a set of learning outcomes, which are compatible/complementary - not necessarily equivalent - with those of the home programme;*
 - the acquisition of an adequate number of ECTS credits, which does not necessarily involve the one-to-one correspondence of single educational components in the two institutions.*
- 2. All credits gained abroad - if included in the Learning Agreement and certified by the host institution's official Transcript of Records - are automatically recognized by the home institution upon return of the student and used to satisfy specific requirements of the home qualification.*
- 3. Grades are converted by comparing the Grade distribution tables of the home and the host institution.*



The implementation of these procedures is still uneven in European HEIs, mainly due to:

- the decentralized nature of mobility activities (single departments, degree programmes);*
- the frequent turnover of academics/administrators involved in the management of such activities;*
- a negative approach to the technical aspects of developing and using grade distribution tables.*

Good practice shows that these problems can be overcome

- if regulations for recognition are adopted, and their implementation is monitored, at the institutional level;*
- if national guidelines are developed at the national level both for recognition procedures and the development of grade distribution tables.*

TO CONCLUDE

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



In order to facilitate an even implementation of the ECTS system - as described in the ECTS Users' Guide – in all EHEA countries, it seems that

- 1. institutional credit allocation procedures, as well as the consistency between defined learning outcomes and teaching/learning/assessment methods,*
- 2. the quality of Course Catalogues,*
- 3. institutional recognition procedures*

should be defined and monitored at the institutional level.

QA National Agencies should verify that this process takes place.



Good practice shows that that HEIs' self-regulation and internal monitoring activities can be positively oriented and greatly facilitated by appropriate guidelines at the national level.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



THANK YOU

FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area