ECTS Users' Guide

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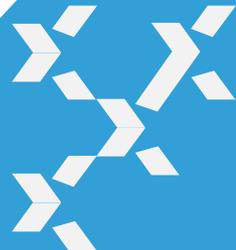
What is ECTS?

- Instituted in 1989 within the Erasmus programme

- Used for accumulating credits in institutions' degree programmes

- Helps in the design, description and delivery of programmes

- Can be applied to all programmes and all kinds of learning contexts

- Increases transparency and comparability of degrees and has a positive impact on the level of trust in the quality of the programmes

What is the ECTS Guide?

The ECTS Users' Guide offers guidelines for implementing ECTS and links to useful supporting documents.

Originally developed within the EU Erasmus Programme, it is now an fficial document of the European Higher Education Area.

The guide helps:

- **Students** to understand what's expected of them and evaluate their own achievements

- **Institutions** to design their programmes and ensure that credits are recognised when students move from one university to another

- **Teachers** to deliver their programmes more effectively

- **Stakeholders** to better understand what students have achieved during their studies

New for the 2015 Guide

Official adoption 14-15 May, Bologna Ministerial meeting, Yerevan

Revised in order to strengthen the '**meaningful implementation of learning outcomes**' in the EHEA.

Written by a **working group of practitioners** appointed by Bologna countries and stakeholders' associations.

Includes a focus on **programme design and delivery**, and builds on the experience of HEIs in using **qualifications frameworks** and applying ECTS principles.

Takes into account recent developments in the Bologna Process such as the:
- establishment of the EHEA
- consolidation of lifelong learning
- shift from teacher-centred to student-centred higher education
- increasing use of learning outcomes
- development of new modes of learning and teaching

Learner-centred system

Mobility supporting documents

ECTS key features

Learning outcomes; workload

Recognition of prior learning; Lifelong learning

Credits: allocation, award, accumulation, transfer

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ECTS programme design

The following steps have been identified as helpful in designing programmes:

- Programme context

- Programme profile

- Learning outcomes

- Programme structure

- Assessment

- Monitoring

"*It [ECTS] helps you to plan a programme, by giving you clear direction about what to do when*"
– Volker Gehmlich, ECTS Expert

ECTS programme design

Learning outcomes

Recommended: 10-12 learning outcomes at programme level
6-8 learning outcomes for educational components

Guidelines

Learning outcomes should:
- reflect the context, level, scope and content of the programme
- be succinct and not too detailed;
- be mutually consistent
- be easily understandable and verifiable
- be achievable within the workload
- be linked with appropriate learning activities, assessment methods and assessment criteria

Formulation

- Use an active verb to express what students are expected to know and be able to do
- Specify what the outcomes refer to
- Specify the way of demonstrating the achievement of the learning outcomes

ECTS programme design

Programme structure

- 60 credits for a full-time-equivalent academic year
- Use of modules – benefits for collaboration across subjects and faculties
- 'Mobility windows' facilitate learning mobility
- Progression requirements must be explicit
- Independent learners joining a formal programme should receive appropriate counselling/advice to support them

Doctoral education

- Doctoral education is in the process of a change

- There is a greater variety of routes to a doctorate

- It is being recognised that high level training is helpful to develop third cycle generic (transferable) and subject-specific competences

- In some countries and institutions, ECTS is also used in the third cycle

- If ECTS is used, the guidelines contained in this ECTS Users' Guide should apply, taking into account the specific nature of doctoral degrees

Study abroad with ECTS

Key supporting documents for credit mobility:

- Course Catalogue

- Learning Agreement

- Transcript of Records

- Traineeship Certificate

"ECTS allows you to spend a study period abroad at a European institution, bring results back to your home institution, have them recognised and included towards your final degree in the Diploma Supplement, and this is done via a Learning Agreement"
                                        – Raimonda Markeviciene, ECTS Expert

Study abroad with ECTS

Credit mobility

Before the credit mobility period: the student, sending institution and receiving institution/organisation agree on the programme abroad and formalise a Learning Agreement

After the credit mobility period: the receiving institution provides the sending institution and the student with a Transcript of Records

The golden rule

All credits gained during the period of study abroad or during the virtual mobility – as agreed in the Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – should be transferred without delay and counted towards the student's degree without any additional work by, or assessment of, the student

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Grade distribution

- European HEIs have different grading scales and passing rates

- Mobility students have the right to a fair conversion of the grades they've obtained during a period of study abroad

- Each HEI should produce a grading table for each degree course within a specific subject area

- This will help ensure the transparency of the grading culture and the accurate conversion of grades for mobility students

- Optional: grade conversion

Grade distribution

Grading table example

Grades used in institution (from highest to lowest passing grade)*	Number of passing grades awarded to the reference group	Percentage of each grade with respect to the total passing grades awarded	Cumulative percentage of passing grades awarded
10	50	5%	5%
9	100	10%	15%
8	350	35%	50%
7	300	30%	80%
6	200	20%	100%
Total:	1,000	100%	

* Grading systems/approaches may be established at national level

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Grade conversion

- The grade distribution tables of the sending and receiving institutions should be compared when transferring the grades of mobility students

- The position of each grade within the two tables should be compared, and individual grades converted on the basis of this

- Percentages ranges of grades often overlap. The receiving institution should decide in advance how they will measure the comparable grade of the overlapping ranges (minimum, average or maximum)

> "*Through the use of grading tables, all grades could be converted in a transparent and fair way for all cases of students' mobility*"
> – Maria Sticchi Damiani, ECTS Expert

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Grade conversion

Grading conversion table example

University of Paris, France

| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |

University of Rome, Italy

| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%
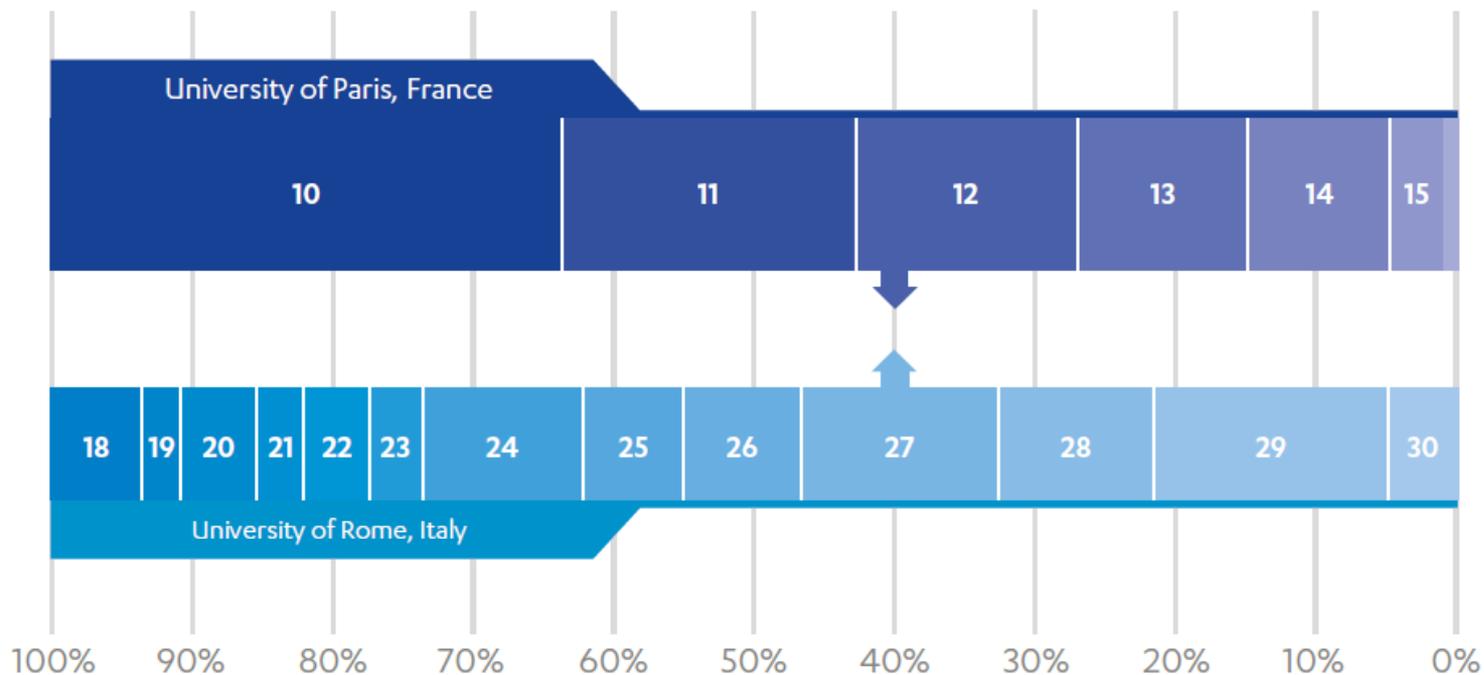
University of Paris, France
ISCED-F Code 023 Languages

University of Rome, Italy
ISCED-F Code 023 Languages

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ECTS and lifelong learning

- Changing higher education landscape:

  more diversified student group,

  need for more flexible learning opportunities

  individual learning pathways and

  different modes of learning, including digital and online technologies

- ECTS can be used in all lifelong learning contexts regardless of the mode, location or country

- Open learning: providers of all 'formally' quality assured higher education courses are encouraged to use ECTS

ECTS and lifelong learning

Flexible learning opportunities

Blended learning

Micro-credentials

New forms of open online learning

Continual Professional Development (CPD)

"Higher education is opening up to flexible learning"
– Nevena Vuksanovic, European Students' Union

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Work-based learning

Self-directed learning

Individual learning pathways

ECTS and lifelong learning

Recognition of prior learning and experience

- HEIs should develop recognition policies for learning outcomes acquired outside the formal learning context, provided these learning outcomes satisfy the requirements of the qualification or its components

- After appropriate assessment, the same number of ECTS credits as attached to the corresponding part of the formal programme should be awarded

- Appropriate staff and transparent methods

- Advice to learners, counselling opportunities

ECTS and quality assurance

Good practice in using ECTS will help institutions **improve the quality of their programmes** and their **learning mobility offer**.

ECTS should be quality assured through appropriate evaluation processes and continuous quality enhancement.

Evaluation indicators

- Educational components are expressed in terms of appropriate learning outcomes, and information is available concerning their level, credits, delivery and assessment
- Studies can be completed in the time allocated to them
- Annual monitoring examines any variations in patterns of achievement and results, and follows up with appropriate revision
- Students are provided with detailed information and advice
- Students are informed promptly of their results

Implementation

- Deeply anchored in the [Erasmus Charter for Higher Education](#) (including the accompanying [Guidelines](#))

- Key element of the [Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad](#)

- Key commitment of the Bologna Process – [peer group](#)

- ECTS conference June 2019: [summary and main conclusions](#); [presentations](#)

- Example (Italy): see handouts

- Way forward

ECTS Guide online:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index_en.htm

To get a copy:

https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1

Thank you for your attention!