



# **ECTS USERS' GUIDE**

EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION SYSTEM

AND

THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT



Directorate-General for Education and Culture "

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## INTRODUCTION

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The European Credit Transfer System was initially set up in 1989 as a pilot scheme within the framework of the Erasmus programme. Its aim at that time was to facilitate the recognition of study periods undertaken abroad by mobile students through the transfer of credits. As a transfer system ECTS has expanded to over 30 countries and has been introduced in more than one thousand higher education institutions.

The 40 Signatory States in the Bologna Process have identified ECTS as one of the cornerstones of the European Higher Education Area. A large number of countries have adopted ECTS by law as an accumulation system for their own higher education systems and others are in the process of doing so. In some countries ECTS has become a requirement for accreditation. The Zurich Conference on Credit Transfer and Accumulation, held in October 2002 by the European University Association, endorsed the central role of ECTS in higher education. ECTS will have a fundamental place in the design of a national and European Qualifications Framework. Schemes based on ECTS are being introduced in other continents.

The correct use of ECTS depends on the commitment of thousands of motivated people working in higher education, in very different circumstances and cultures.

The following measures have been taken in order to assist these persons and to promote the correct and consistent use of ECTS across Europe:

- This Users' Guide is made available in user-friendly web-based form, including examples and answers to frequently asked questions
- A short brochure named ECTS Key Features is available on the web and can be obtained in hard copy
- An ECTS Label has been introduced for higher education institutions using ECTS in a correct way in all their degree programmes.
- ECTS/DS Counsellors across Europe are available to provide guidance to institutions wishing to introduce ECTS and prepare for the ECTS Label.

ECTS makes study programmes easy to read and compare. It can be used for all types of programmes, whatever their mode of delivery, and for lifelong learning purposes. It serves both mobile and non-mobile students: it can be used for accumulation within an institution and for transfer between institutions. ECTS helps learners moving between countries, within a country, town or region, as well as between different types of institutions; it also covers self-study and work experience. For these reasons the well-known acronym "ECTS" now stands for "European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System".

The Diploma Supplement is another important transparency tool, closely linked to ECTS. Therefore, information on the Diploma Supplement and on the Diploma Supplement label has been included in this guide.

We hope that the new ECTS Users' Guide will be helpful and welcome comments for its future improvement.

## KEY FEATURES OF ECTS

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[ECTS credits](#)

[Student workload](#)

[Learning outcomes and competences](#)

[ECTS grading scale](#)

### ECTS credits

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The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study. These objectives should preferably be specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be acquired.

- ECTS is based on the principle that 60 credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year. The student workload of a full-time study programme in Europe amounts in most cases to around 1500-1800 hours per year and in those cases one credit stands for around 25 to 30 working hours.
- Credits in ECTS can only be obtained after successful completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved. Learning outcomes are sets of competences, expressing what the student will know, understand or be able to do after completion of a process of learning, long or short.
- Student workload in ECTS consists of the time required to complete all planned learning activities such as attending lectures, seminars, independent and private study, preparation of projects, examinations, and so forth.
- Credits are allocated to all educational components of a study programme (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.) and reflect the quantity of work each component requires to achieve its specific objectives or learning outcomes in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study successfully.

### How to allocate credits?

Credit may be allocated to all types of study programmes, irrespective of their length, composition or nature. Programmes may consist of year-long courses or shorter modules. They may cover work placements and research. They may be first, second or third cycle. Credits can also be used for stand-alone courses, such as modules offered to learners not engaged in a full cycle programme of study.

The correct way:

Base the allocation of credits to the different components of a study year on a realistic estimation of the student workload required for the average student to achieve the learning outcomes established for each of the components. Make sure that the total number of credits

for one academic year is 60. Subsequently, check the original allocation of credits on a regular basis by gathering and analysing bottom-up information on actual student workload. For more information see the section on [student workload](#)

One wrong way: linking credits to contact hours.

There is no direct link between contact hours and credits. For example, a lecture hour may require three hours of independent study by the student, while a two-hour seminar might involve a full week of preparation. A student-workload based system like ECTS therefore cannot be based on contact hours, even if a university uses the indication of the number of contact hours for other purposes, such as calculating staff time.

Another wrong way: linking credits to status or prestige.

ECTS credits only express student workload measured in time. They say nothing about the status of a course unit or the prestige of a teacher. For example, an introductory course might require more student time than an advanced one. The specific characteristics of each course unit will be described in the [Information Package/Course Catalogue](#).

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***All learners are different. Some learn slowly, others quickly. Why base credits on “the average learner”?***

Of course, individual learners might need more or less time to achieve the same learning outcomes. However, basing a programme on a reasonable and realistic estimate of the time required by an average learner protects all students from unrealistic and overloaded programmes or from excessively light and undemanding ones. It helps academic staff to design and deliver realistic curricula.

***Are credits recognised automatically by universities?***

ECTS does not guarantee automatic academic recognition. The degree awarding institution decides on what credits to accept for a specific programme. Recognition is of course obligatory in the case of agreed student mobility when there is a prior [Learning Agreement](#), between the home institution, the host institution and the student as is the case in the Socrates-Erasmus programme. The [ECTS Transcript of Records](#) and the [Diploma Supplement](#) facilitate swift and informed recognition decisions.

***Does a university have to accept students with ECTS credits wishing to enter later years of study?***

No, the degree awarding institution decides what to accept or not to accept. However, the learner has a right to careful consideration of his/her previous studies. ECTS transparency tools provide the necessary information.

***Is there a minimum number of credits that must be obtained at the degree awarding institution?***

That is entirely up to the degree awarding institution to decide, within the legal framework in which it operates.

***Would the same module utilised in different programmes of the same institution carry the same number of credits for all students?***

Yes, if the module is truly the same, it would carry the same credit weight, independent of the programme in which it is situated. However, it may happen that modules having similar learning outcomes might require different amounts of time from students in different programmes because of differences in their previous knowledge and in the choice of materials to be studied. These characteristics will be clarified in the course descriptions contained in the Information Package/Course catalogue.

***Can an academic programme contain more than 60 credits per year?***

In exceptional cases, when a programme of study clearly exceeds the European average of around 1500/1800 hours per year, an academic year could contain more credits. These cases must be well documented and justified in the Information Package/Course Catalogue. A programme designed to require 52 weeks of full-time study (no holidays), would normally lead to 75 credit points. The 'high intensity' or 'special quality' of a course is not a reason to give more credits.

***Should a student acquire exactly 60 credits a year or 30 per semester or 20 per trimester?***

A full time student would normally acquire 60 credits per year, 30 per semester or 20 per trimester because study programmes are designed to this purpose. A successful mobile student might, exceptionally, acquire a few more or less credits as a result of the complexity of designing a programme of study abroad which fits his/her curricular needs. Such small differences would be foreseen and approved in the Learning Agreement.

***Can an unsuccessful student receive credits for course units failed?***

Students need to be successful and be awarded a passing grade in order to receive credits for the course unit concerned. Within a condoning procedure the institution might exempt a student from getting credits in a specific module by stating that overall the student has achieved the objectives of that particular year of the programme the student has registered for because of his/her overall performance. Details of this process have clearly to be stated.

***Can a student who studies abroad and sits exams abroad be obliged to sit exams (during or after the stay abroad, in person or electronically) at the home university, covering the same period of study?***

No, the period of study undertaken abroad (including examinations or other forms of assessment) replaces a comparable period of study (likewise including examination or other forms of assessment) at the home institution.

***Must a university recognise courses successfully taken by the student, but not listed in the Learning Agreement?***

No, the university is not under such an obligation. All courses followed should be listed in the Learning Agreement. The Learning Agreement may be amended and such an amended

version must be signed again by the three parties concerned: the home university, the host university and the student.

***Are work placements covered by ECTS?***

Yes, ECTS is not limited to taught courses. It also covers work placements. Work placements can be described in terms of learning outcomes and work time expressed in ECTS credits. The award of credits, of course, can only take place after appropriate assessment.

***May the doctoral cycle carry credits?***

Yes, ECTS can be applied both to taught courses and to research. Hence it can be applied to the doctoral cycle. The learning which takes place in the doctoral cycle, as in any other, can be described in terms of learning outcomes and work time expressed in ECTS credits.

***Can you provide some examples of credit allocation?***

Some schematic examples are presented below:

**Example 1 – First Cycle (Bachelor) – *Preferable***  
***(semester or trimester system and a common basic number of credits)***

Year 1	10		10		60
	10		10		
	10		10		
Year 2	20		20	20	60
Year 3	5	5	10	20	60
	5	5	10		
Total					180

**Example 2– First Cycle (Bachelor) – *Acceptable***  
***(common basic number of credits)***

Year 1	20			60	
	10	10			
	15		5		
Year 2	20			15	60
	25				
Year 3	10	10	20		60
	10	10			
Total					180

**Example 3– First Cycle (Bachelor) – *Acceptable***  
***(variable number of credits)***

Year 1	16			60
	11			
	9			
	7			
	17			
Year 2	23			60
	9	8		
	13	7		
Year 3	5	14	22	60
	8	11		
Year 4	21			60
	20			
	19			
Total				240

Good practice in credit allocation suggests that institutions should use a common basic number of credits (for example 5 or 6) which makes it easier to combine credits from different departments. For more concrete examples refer to the home page of the ECTS label institutions.



## Student workload

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Several approaches for determining student workload in higher education programmes are being developed across Europe. A promising approach has been tested in the framework of the university project “[Tuning Educational Structures in Europe](#)”<sup>1</sup>, supported by the European Commission in the framework of the Socrates programme. This project focuses on learning outcomes and general (generic) competences and subject related competences. It shows that approaches to teaching, learning and assessment have an impact on workload. It identifies a four step approach for determining student workload.

### The four steps

To realize the overall objective, namely the development of an approach which leads to a truly valid consideration of a student’s workload, implementation of the following steps is recommended.

#### *I. Introducing modules/course units*

There are non-modularized systems and modularized systems. In a non-modularized system each course unit can have a different number of credits although the total for one year will still be 60. In contrast, in a modularized system the course units/modules have a fixed workload, 5 credits for example, or a multiple of this number. The workload of a module is based on the total amount of tasks a student is expected to do as part of the overall programme of study. These tasks are defined with a view to the learning outcomes to be achieved, and the time (work hours) a student needs to achieve them. For example, a module of 5 credits allows for around 125 hours of work of a typical student.

#### *II. Estimating student workload*

Each module is based on a number of educational activities. They can be defined by considering the following aspects:

- *types of courses*: lecture, seminar, research seminar, exercise course, practical, laboratory work, guided personal study, tutorial, independent studies, internship, placement or ‘stage’, fieldwork, project work, etc.
- *types of learning activities*: attending lectures, performing specific assignments, practising technical or laboratory skills, writing papers, reading books and papers, learning how to give constructive criticism of the work of others, chairing meetings, etc.
- *types of assessment*: oral examination, written examination, oral presentation, test, paper, portfolio, thesis, report about an internship, report on fieldwork, continuous assessment, etc.

Teachers estimate the time required to complete the activities foreseen for each course unit / module. The workload expressed in time should match the number of credits available for the course unit. Teachers must develop suitable strategies to use to best advantage the time available.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the Tuning project can be found on the Europa Internet server: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning_en.html) ; or on the servers of the coordinating institutions: University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain ([www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm](http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm)) or University of Groningen, The Netherlands ([www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm](http://www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm)).

### *III. Checking the estimated workload through student evaluations*

There are different methods to check whether the estimated student workload is correct. The most common method is the use of questionnaires to be completed by students, either during the learning process or after the completion of the course.

### *IV. Adjustment of workload and/or educational activities*

The outcome of the monitoring process or an updating of the course content might lead to an adjustment of the workload and/or the type of educational activities of the course unit/module. In a modularized model it will be necessary to adjust the amount of learning material and/or the types of teaching, learning and assessment activities, because the number of credits (e.g., in our example, 5 or a multiple of 5) is fixed. In a non-modular model also the number of credits can be changed, but this will, of course, have an effect on other units, because the total number of credits of the programme of study is fixed (e.g. 30 per semester, 60 per year etc.). An adjustment of workload and/or activities is required anyway when the monitoring process reveals that the estimated student workload does not correspond to the actual workload.

Tuning offers two forms that can be helpful in making decisions on and adjustment of the student workload. The first form is for the teacher to plan the educational module and estimate the student working hours involved. The second is for the student to indicate the actual amount of time spent on the module, thus providing an opportunity to check whether the estimated workload corresponds to reality.

[Planning Form for an Educational Module \(teacher\)](#)   [Standard form](#)   [Completed example](#)  
[Form for Checking Workload of an Educational Module](#)   [Standard form](#)   [Completed example](#)  
[\(student\)](#)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***What is the ideal size for a course unit / module?***

This is up to the teaching staff, although it is recommended not to make units too small to avoid fragmentation of a student's programme of study. It is also advised not to make the units too large, to avoid creating potential stumbling blocks in the learning process.

## Learning outcomes and competences

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As stated above, learning outcomes are sets of competences, expressing what the student will know, understand or be able to do after completion of a process of learning, whether long or short. They can refer to a period of studies, for example to a first or a second cycle programme, or to a single course unit or module. Learning outcomes specify the requirements for award of credit. They are formulated by academic staff. The actual competences acquired by the individual learner may of course go beyond the stated learning outcomes.

Competences represent a dynamic combination of attributes, abilities and attitudes. They can be **subject specific** or generic. Fostering competences is the object of educational programmes; they will be formed in various modules/course units and assessed at different stages.

Study programmes are divided into blocks or clusters of units, which should correspond to specified learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and understanding).

Universities are encouraged to describe learning outcomes and competences for each course unit. See the section on the [Information Package/Course catalogue](#), but it is a fact that writing learning outcomes is new to university staff in most countries. There is a clear need for guidance and exchange of experience on writing and using learning outcomes in different languages and cultural settings. As a first step readers of the Guide are referred to the [Tuning project](#), and the web site of the Bologna Seminar on Using learning Outcomes held in Edinburgh on 1-2 July 2004.<sup>2</sup>

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***What is the point of describing course units / modules and study programmes in terms of learning outcomes rather than in terms of contents in the traditional way?***

In final analysis the aim of education is to prepare learners for an active and positive role in society. Learning outcomes place the emphasis on the results of the learning process for the learner in terms of knowledge, understanding and abilities rather than on the means the teaching staff employs to obtain those results. In other words, the use of learning outcomes represents a shift in thinking from a staff-based input-oriented system to a student-centred output-oriented approach.

***What is the connection between learning outcomes and competences?***

Learning outcomes of a specific study programme or a course unit / module are expressed in terms of competences.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bologna-edinburgh2004.org.uk/library.asp> And notably to the conference paper “Linking Levels, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria” of Jenny Moon of Exeter University.

***Can you give a concrete example of how to express learning outcomes in terms of competences?***

Here are some examples.

An example of a subject specific competence in the field of History:

*At the end of the course unit/module the learner is expected to demonstrate his/her ability to comment and annotate texts and documents correctly according to the critical canons of the discipline.*

An example of a subject specific competence in the field of Physics:

*At the end of the course unit/module the learner is expected to be able to describe and explain the function of the basic devices of optoelectronics; optical fibres; liquid crystal displays; bi-polar and surface field effect transistors and MOS light emitting diodes.*

An example of a generic competence:

*At the end of the course unit/module the learner is expected to be able to demonstrate the use of information-retrieval skills effectively, in relation to primary and secondary information sources, including information retrieval through on-line computer searches.*

## The ECTS grading scale

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Grading is an essential and sensitive part of the learning process. It is strongly rooted in the diverse pedagogical and cultural traditions of the various educational systems in Europe. There is a need, however, to make national grading systems more transparent, to allow a smooth transfer of grades from one system to another, in order to serve mobile learners and graduates.

In the framework of ECTS a grading scale has been developed to facilitate the understanding and comparison of grades given according to different national systems. It has no national reference point and aims at an objective evaluation of student abilities relative to those of other students within the same system. It was not designed to replace national systems, but to enhance the understanding of them in other countries.

The ECTS grading scale is based on the rank of a student in a given assessment, that is how he/she performed relative to other students. The ECTS system classifies students into broad groups and thus makes interpretation of ranking simpler. It is this grouping that lies at the heart of the ECTS grading system.

The ECTS system initially divides students between pass and fail groups, and then assesses the performance of these two groups separately. Those obtaining passing grades are divided into five subgroups: the best 10% are awarded an A-grade, the next 25% a B-grade, the following 30% a C-grade, the following 25% a D-grade and the final 10% an E-grade.

Those who have not achieved a performance sufficient to allow a passing grade are divided into two subgroups: FX (Fail – some more work required before credit can be awarded) and F (Fail – considerable further work is required). This distinction allows differentiation between those students who have been assessed as almost passing and those who have clearly lacked the required knowledge and skills.

The ECTS grading scale can be represented in tabular fashion:

ECTS Grade	% of successful students normally achieving the grade	Comment
A	10	The use of words like “excellent” or “good” is no longer recommended as they do not fit with percentage based ranking of the ECTS Grade Transfer Scale.
B	25	
C	30	
D	25	
E	10	
FX	--	Fail – some work required to pass
F	--	FAIL – considerable further work required

The main requirements for establishing ECTS grades are: the availability of sufficiently detailed primary data, cohorts of sufficient size to ensure validity, proper statistical methods and regular quality control of the results obtained through the use of the scale.

The degree of differentiation shown in marks varies greatly not only from country to country, but in many cases within a single country, or indeed within a single institution. Expression in terms of ECTS grades is simple where the local marks are highly differentiated. However, a sizeable number of instances exist where the local marks are less differentiated than those of the ECTS grading scale. These cases fall into two categories depending on whether the primary assessment data allows establishment of a ranking list or not. Where the original assessment can provide a ranking list, this ranking may be used directly to provide the appropriate ECTS grade. Where a valid ranking cannot be obtained from the primary assessment data, only an ECTS pass or fail should be recorded

The size of the cohort used as a basis for arriving at the ECTS grades is of great importance. When large numbers of students are being assessed for the same course unit/module at the same time, the situation is straightforward as the results of the assessment can be used to arrive directly at ranking and therefore to ECTS grades. A cohort of students where at least 30 individuals achieve passing grades is suggested as the minimum number necessary for meaningful ranking, although larger numbers are to be preferred.

A variety of strategies are open to institutions where cohorts are not of sufficient size. Grades obtained at different sessions or in different, but related modules at the same session may be compiled in a variety of ways to arrive at suitably sized cohorts. For instance, experience shows that:

- the marks over several course units/modules of similar level often follow a similar distribution
- the distribution of marks over a five-year period is likely to produce a balanced result.

Higher education institutions should strive to provide ECTS grades for all of their students and to take into account the ECTS grades awarded by other institutions. A certain amount of flexibility is always advisable since the ECTS grading scale was designed to improve transparency of a variety of grading systems and cannot, by itself, cover all possible cases.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***Is the use of the ECTS Grade Transfer Scale obligatory under ECTS?***

The use of the scale is strongly recommended. The scale is, however, not obligatory for the award of the ECTS label.

#### ***How should we handle systems which provide only pass – fail assessment?***

Obviously local systems where assessment is aimed at only pass/fail or threshold criteria cannot provide ranking. In these cases a pass should be indicated, for example by inserting the letter P or the word ‘pass’ in the column for grades. Such institutions which award only pass/fail or threshold criteria should indicate this very clearly in their Information Package/Course Catalogue as this fact may have recognition consequences for visiting students returning to an institution with a more differentiated grading system.

#### ***Is it necessary to indicate the percentage of students who failed a course unit/module?***

It is not obligatory, but transparency is increased if the percentage failure rate is given for each of the courses graded. It is recommended that these rates be included in the Transcript of Records.

***What should one do when the national system has fewer passing marks than the five letters (for successful students) in the ECTS grading scale?***

The closer an institution can get to a one-to-one relationship between its own marks and the ECTS grading scale, the easier the grading process will become. In other cases decisions must be made according to the distribution pattern of local grades trying to avoid injustice to students.

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## ECTS for Lifelong Learning

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Not all learners are full time students enrolled in regular degree programmes. A growing number of adult learners follow ‘stand-alone’ courses or modules, which may or may not be linked to formal qualifications, such as courses for Continuous Professional Development. Masses of people possess valuable skills and competences acquired outside higher education institutions, through self study, work or life experience. There is no reason why non-traditional learners should not benefit from the transparency and recognition provided by ECTS.

How can such diverse learning be expressed in credits and be considered - if so wished -, towards a formal qualification? This can be done by applying the two basic parameters of ECTS: workload and learning outcomes. Every type of learning can be expressed in learning outcomes and every type of learning requires a (realistic/average) workload, which can be expressed in credits.

The real issue at stake is validation and certification: who decides on the learning outcomes and on the number of credits to be awarded? In higher education the answer is clear: universities and other higher education institutions across Europe are the competent authorities to define and assess learning outcomes and they can award credits to learners, be it full-time students or non-traditional learners seeking recognition for knowledge and skills acquired outside the formal setting.

Universities are in the position to link learning outcomes achieved outside the institution to credits they award to comparable learning outcomes acquired in their formal degree programmes. In other words: they can award waivers using their formal programme as a reference point.

Because of university autonomy the credit value awarded – the waiver – might vary from programme to programme. In 2004-2005, a pilot project has started in which ECTS label holding institutions will exchange experience in awarding credits to different types of learning and explore if and to what extent certain skills and competences could obtain an ‘objective’ credit value across Europe. Groups of universities could, for example, agree to attach the same credit value to certain levels of language proficiency.

ECTS provides tools to document workload related to learning outcomes in formal, non-formal and informal learning<sup>3</sup>. No new documents have to be introduced. The ECTS Transcript of Records, for example, can be used to describe what the learner has achieved, regardless of where the learning took place and how the learning process was organised.

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<sup>3</sup> Lifelong Learning (LLL) comprises all types of learning and training within any type of institution, company or outside in the field, i.e. formal, non-formal and informal learning. Whereas formal learning takes place in education and training institutions and leads to recognised diplomas and other types of documented qualifications, non-formal learning occurs outside mainstream education and training and does not aim at formalised certificates. Informal learning is a natural consequence of everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and may not be recognised by the individuals concerned as contributing to their knowledge and skills.



### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***How can my university be engaged in the further development of ECTS for Lifelong learning?***

The Institutions awarded the ECTS label will be eligible to apply to their Socrates-Erasmus National Agency for an “ECTS for Lifelong learning Grant”. The Grant will enable institutions to join the “ECTS for Lifelong learning Pilot” and experiment with credit based mechanisms for the recognition of learning outcomes and competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. This involvement would help interested universities to become learning centres for their region and increase access for learners from professional life and other non-traditional learning environments.

## KEY DOCUMENTS OF ECTS

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[Information Package/Course Catalogue](#)

[ECTS Student Application Form](#)

[ECTS Learning Agreement](#)

[ECTS Recognition Sheet](#)

[ECTS Transcript of Records](#)

### **Information Package/Course Catalogue**

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The [Information Package/Course Catalogue](#) is the most important ECTS document. It should make study programmes easy to understand and compare for all students and staff – local and foreign – and provide them with essential institutional, academic and practical information.

[The Information Package/Course Catalogue is not a special guide solely for mobile students.](#) It should be a document used by all students – local and visiting students alike. The university decides on the format and whether to publish it as a single documents or in parts. It is strongly recommended that its entire content should be available on the web and that it should be accessible for the visually impaired. It should be systematically updated at least every year. Moreover the Web version should be easily accessible from the institution's home page with a minimum number of clicks.

The Information Package/Course Catalogue not only lists and describes the study programmes and their course units and modules, but also supplies all the information which a student needs to make up his/her mind as to whether or not to study at a certain institution, in a specific programme, or to take certain modules. The Information Package/Course Catalogue is essential because it provides all the necessary information on study programmes and it must be available before students undertake their studies.

The Information Package/Course Catalogue of the institution is to be published in the local language of instruction and in English (or only in English for programmes taught in English) on the Web and/or in hard copy in one or more booklets. The Information Package/Course Catalogue must contain all the items in the checklist below.

[Information Package/Course Catalogue :Examples](#)

### **Checklist for the Information Package/Course Catalogue**

#### **Part One: Information on the Institution**

- Name and address
- Academic calendar
- Academic authorities
- General description of the institution (including type and status)
- List of degree programmes offered

- Admission/registration procedures
- Main university regulations (notably recognition procedures)
- ECTS institutional co-ordinator

## **Part Two: Information on degree programmes**

### ***A) General description***

- Qualification awarded
- Admission requirements
- Educational and professional goals
- Access to further studies
- Course structure diagram with credits (60 per year)
- Final examination, if any
- Examination and assessment regulations
- ECTS departmental co-ordinator

### ***B) Description of individual course units***

- Course title
- Course code
- Type of course
- Level of course
- Year of study
- Semester/trimester
- Number of credits
- Name of lecturer
- Objectives of the course (preferably expressed in terms of learning outcomes and competences)
- Prerequisites
- Course contents
- Recommended reading
- Teaching methods
- Assessment methods
- Language of instruction

## **Part Three: General information for students**

- Cost of living
- Accommodation
- Meals
- Medical facilities
- Facilities for special needs students
- Insurance
- Financial support for students
- Student affairs office
- Study facilities
- International programmes
- Practical information for mobile students
- Language courses
- Internships

- Sports facilities
- Extra-mural and leisure activities
- Student associations

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***Should the entire Information Package/Course Catalogue of a university be published in one book?***

No, as long as all the information is accessible for all students – local and foreign, the university is free to decide on the format and whether to publish it as a whole or in parts. This decision will be influenced or determined by the arrangements which already apply for the publication of student information. Hence some institutions publish University information, Faculty information and departmental information separately. Provided that all the items on the checklist are covered in one or more publications, ECTS does not prescribe form, size or number of publications.

***Is it acceptable to publish the entire Information Package/Course Catalogue on the web only?***

Yes, as long as the web site is easy to access. It is recommended that earlier versions of the Information Package/Course Catalogue should be retained and kept accessible on the web for a reasonable period of time in order to provide information on and facilitate recognition of work done in previous years. "Guidance how to produce a web based Information Package/Course Catalogue (based on XML) will be available before the start of the academic year 2005-2006. The use of a common electronic language would facilitate web searches considerably.

***Are all elements of the checklist essential?***

Yes. The Information Package/Course Catalogue should contain information to guide, inform and support current and potential students and partners from within your country and from abroad.

***What is meant by "main university regulations" (notably recognition procedures)?***

Here an institution could briefly describe what procedures are followed to ensure fair recognition and equal treatment and how, where and when the ECTS documents (Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records) are processed.

***Is it necessary to translate the whole package if the original is not in English?***

Yes. This might seem a burden, but the aim of ECTS is to provide accessible information to current and potential students and partners in your country and abroad. Try to imagine yourself in the position of professors in 30 other countries having to judge the relevance, level, content, nature of assessments and general structural organisation of your courses for his or her mobile students and you will understand why it is crucial for your Information Package/Course Catalogue to be translated into English. The same is true for foreign students who are considering enrolling in your institution to study for a degree (first, second or third

cycle) and who may wish to learn your language eventually. They also need translated information in order to make an informed decision on where to study. Translating the entire Information Package/Course Catalogue is a condition for the award of the [ECTS label](#).

***Is it not too much work and too expensive to translate the whole package every year?***

Part One (Information on the institution) and Part Three (General information for students) will need to be translated only once and then updated regularly for the whole institution. Part Two A (General description of degree programmes) will normally only be a few pages for each cycle (bachelor/master/doctorate) and will change infrequently. Part Two B (Description of individual course units) will normally be a maximum of one page per course unit, and each will need to be updated and translated once a year. This task should be feasible for the departments concerned. It is also in their interest that their offer and activities be well presented.

***Is ECTS obligatory for universities participating in Socrates-Erasmus?***

No. However Erasmus requires full transparent academic recognition and the use of ECTS provides a well recognised and straightforward way to ensure that recognition.

Full academic recognition means that the home university guarantees that the period of study undertaken abroad (including examinations and/or other forms of assessment) will be recognised as replacing a comparable period of study (likewise including examination and/or other forms of assessment) at the home university even though the content may differ. It is essential that the student be able to access information about the content of the courses to be followed abroad in order to create an appropriate study programme. At the end of the period abroad, the host university must provide the incoming student and the home university with a transcript confirming that the agreed programme of study has been completed and listing the student's courses/modules and the detailed results.

***Is the use of the ECTS Grading Scale obligatory for the ECTS Label***

The use of the ECTS Grading Scale is strongly recommended but is not an obligatory requirement for the award of the ECTS Label. In any case it is recommended to explain the local grading system.

## **Student Application Form**

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The ECTS Student Application Form has been developed for mobile students, who will spend a limited study period at a university in another country. Students who intend to take their degree at another university will enrol according to the regular procedures of the institution concerned and will fill in other types of application forms.

The Student Application Form contains all the essential information about a mobile student that is needed by a prospective host institution. If an institution requires further information (for example regarding housing, special health requirements, etc.) from its incoming students it should request this on a separate form.

Institutions may use their own version of the Student Application Form for their outgoing students, provided that it contains the elements and follows the sequence suggested in the standard form provided. The use of the standard ECTS application form is recommended.

[ECTS Student Application form : Standard form - Completed example](#)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***Is the use of the Student Application Form obligatory under ECTS?***

The use of the standard ECTS Student Application Form is strongly recommended for mobile students. However it is not obligatory for the award of the ECTS label if the form used contains all the same elements.

## Learning Agreement

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The ECTS Learning Agreement has been developed for mobile students, spending a limited period of time at a university in another country as is the case in the Erasmus programme.

The Learning Agreement contains the list of course units or modules which the student plans to take. For each course unit/module the title, the code number and the ECTS credit are indicated.

The Learning Agreement has to be signed by the student, the person who has formal authority to commit the home institution, and by an equivalent authority in the receiving institution who thereby guarantees that the incoming student can study the planned course units/modules.

The Learning Agreement guarantees the transfer of credit for courses passed successfully by the student. The competent body or authority of the home university carries out the recognition on the student's return. The student does not need to negotiate recognition with individual professors. The Learning Agreement, together with the [Transcript of Records](#) is designed to guarantee complete recognition.

Of course, it may happen that a programme of study must be modified after the arrival of the mobile student. In such cases, the Learning Agreement must be amended as soon as possible and signed again by the three parties concerned: the home university, the host university and the student. Only in this way can complete recognition of study results be guaranteed.

It is recommended that, in parallel with the Learning Agreement, institutions approve a "Recognition Sheet" for each outgoing student stating from which course units or modules he/she will be exempted at the home institution after successful completion of the study abroad. In this way it should be clear that the study abroad replaces a comparable period of study at home (including examination and/or other forms of assessment). The learning experience abroad, however, does not need to be identical to the learning experience at home.

Institutions are free to use their own version of the Learning Agreement provided that it contains the elements and follows the sequence suggested in the standard ECTS form. However it is recommended to use the standard form.

It should be noted that in addition to the use of the Learning Agreements as part of mobility arrangements, many institutions already use this document as part of their own credit accumulation systems. For each semester or year of study a Learning Agreement is drawn up and signed both by the institution and the student. Such agreements have proved particularly useful in preventing conflict where students have a choice of teaching units within a study programme. The use of such Learning Agreements helps to guarantee that the student is making a choice of teaching units which fully satisfies the programme requirements for the degree which he or she wishes to obtain.

[ECTS Learning Agreement : Standard form - Completed example](#)  
[ECTS Recognition sheet : Standard form - Completed example](#)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***Is the use of the Learning Agreement obligatory under ECTS?***

Yes and it is obligatory for the award of the ECTS label.



## Transcript of Records

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The ECTS Transcript of Records is used to document the performance of a student over a certain period of time by listing the course units or modules taken, the credits gained, the local grades awarded and preferably the corresponding ECTS grades. It reflects both the quantity of work and the quality of achievement.

The Transcript of Records is used for mobility students at two separate moments. First it must be issued and sent to the host institution by the home institution for all outgoing students before their departure in order to provide information about the course units/modules that they already have completed and the results obtained. Secondly it must be issued and sent by the host institution to the home institution for all incoming students at the end of their period of study.

The Transcript of Records provides a standard format for recording all study activities carried out by students. It is an essential tool for academic recognition. Therefore, it is crucial to determine who is responsible for producing it and how it is issued and delivered. Institutions should pay special attention to training academic and administrative staff in the use of the Transcript of Records and the conversion of grades.

The achievements of all students, not only mobile students, can be handled systematically within a single computerised system in the Transcript of Records format. This will make it possible to insert an ECTS Transcript of Records in the Diploma Supplement issued to all graduating students, whether they were mobile or not.

Institutions are free to use their own version of the Transcript of Records provided that it contains the elements and follows the sequence suggested in the standard form provided. The use of the standard ECTS Transcript of Records is, however, recommended.

[ECTS Transcript of Records : Standard form - Completed example](#)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***What is the difference between a Transcript of Records and a Diploma Supplement?***

The Diploma Supplement is linked to a degree/qualification. It supplements an official diploma certifying the award of a degree/qualification. It covers an entire degree programme (for example a first, second or third cycle). It is issued according to a standard international format and reports all activities carried out to obtain the degree. In that sense it is the sum of all Transcripts of Records received by a student within a study programme. In fact it is good practice to insert a final ECTS Transcript of Records in the Diploma Supplement under point 4.3. The Diploma Supplement follows a precise format agreed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO and endorsed by the Bologna Signatory States.

## **ERASMUS STUDENT CHARTER**

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The Erasmus Student Charter is a one-page document designed by ECTS/DS Counsellors to explain clearly the rights and duties of the Erasmus student.

The Charter makes reference to two of the main ECTS tools, the Learning Agreement and the Transcript of Records. The proper use of ECTS tools guarantees that the mobile student will gain full academic recognition.

It is recommended to give a copy of the Charter to all mobile students, incoming and outgoing, so that each is fully informed about what he/she can expect as an Erasmus students and also about his/her responsibilities in order to be sure of obtaining full recognition for the study period abroad.

[Erasmus Student Charter](#)

## KEY PERSONS IN ECTS

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[ECTS Institutional and Departmental Coordinators](#)

[ECTS/DS Counsellors](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### ECTS Institutional and Departmental Coordinators

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Institutions are expected to designate an ECTS Institutional Coordinator, and an ECTS Departmental Coordinator for each department or faculty as appropriate.

Although the precise division of roles between institutional and departmental coordinators may vary from institution to institution, the responsibilities are generally as follows:

- the ECTS Institutional Coordinator ensures the commitment of the institution to and the implementation of ECTS principles and mechanisms within the context of the transfer and accumulation of credits. He/she supervises the mechanisms for the correct use of ECTS tools.
- He/she, along with the Departmental Coordinators, is responsible for ensuring the coordination, preparation, production and dissemination of the institutional Information Package/Course Catalogue, and also that the transfer/accumulation of credits is managed in a consistent manner throughout the university in all departments or faculties.
- the ECTS Departmental Coordinator is the contact person for students and academic staff within the department or faculty, and deals with the practical and academic aspects of ECTS there. He/she should ensure that potentially mobile students have access to the Information Packages/Course Catalogues from partner institutions, that they fill in the Student Application Form and Learning Agreement properly and that they understand the academic recognition procedures.

He/she ensures that a proper Transcript of Records is issued for outgoing students (before their period of study abroad) and for incoming students when they have completed their studies at the host department or faculty.

It is up to the institution to decide the division of tasks between the ECTS Institutional and Departmental Coordinators and, according to their own organisation, which are the binding signatures which must be placed on the ECTS documents (Application Form, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records). The decision must be indicated clearly on the forms, to guarantee validity and transparency.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Must the Coordinators be teaching members of staff?***

This is up to the institution to decide. The Coordinators must have the authority to carry out their tasks effectively on behalf of the institution and the faculty/department.

### ***Can one person combine both tasks?***

Yes, provided that this decision is accepted by the institution and the Faculties/Departments. It will probably be particularly appropriate in smaller institutions.

## **ECTS/DS Counsellors**

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ECTS/DS Counsellors advise universities and other higher education institutions in their country on the use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. They also carry out site-visits to institutions in their own and other countries. They advise institutions on how to prepare for the ECTS label and the Diploma Supplement label and how to use ECTS for credit accumulation and lifelong learning. Counsellors are higher education personnel who have 'hands-on' experience in the field: they are therefore able to give 'peer-to-peer' advice to higher education staff, complementary to that of ministries, national agencies, rectors' conferences, ENIC/NARICs etc.

The ECTS/DS Counsellors are part of a broader team of Bologna Promoters established in each country to provide advice on the implementation of the various aspects of the Bologna process, such as quality assurance, curricular reform, and the recognition of degrees and periods of study.

If you desire advice on the implementation of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement feel free to contact one of the ECTS/DS Counsellors.

[ECTS/DS Counsellors](#)

## ECTS LABEL: CRITERIA AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE

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[ECTS Label Criteria](#)

[Application Procedure for the ECTS label](#)

[Selection Results First Round ECTS Label 1 November 2003](#)

[Application Form for the ECTS Label](#)

[List of Institutions with the ECTS Label](#)

### ECTS Label Criteria

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An ECTS label may be awarded to institutions which apply ECTS in the correct way in all degree programmes. Institutions from all Bologna Signatory States may apply for the ECTS label. Assessment of applications from other countries is not excluded but can not be guaranteed at this stage.

The requirements for the label are the following:

- the institution must make accessible, through its website an Information Package/Course Catalogue in the local language of instruction and in English (or only in English for programmes taught in English); If certain information is not on the web it may be submitted in hard copy.
- it must use ECTS credits correctly and must demonstrate that it has allocated them according to student workload measured in time;
- it has to use the other obligatory ECTS tools (Learning Agreements, Transcripts of Records) properly as well.

Applications which do not contain a complete set of the documents requested in the ECTS Label Application Form will not be assessed.

The samples and information provided will be assessed by the European Commission with the assistance of independent experts. Those institutions which satisfy all the requirements will be awarded the ECTS Label and the list of those that receive the Label will be published on the web. Obtaining the Label will contribute to the image of the institution concerned, showing that it is a reliable partner in European and international cooperation. The award of the ECTS Label will make a growing number of Institutions eligible to participate in the new pilot project on [ECTS for Lifelong learning](#).

The Label will be valid for three academic years and will be monitored with the assistance of the ECTS/DS Counsellors. Where it is evident that the requirements are not being fulfilled, the ECTS Label may be withdrawn. The criteria and procedures for cases of withdrawal of the ECTS Label will be published on the Commission web pages.

## **Application Procedure for the ECTS label**

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[Application Form for the ECTS Label](#)  
[List of Institutions with the ECTS Label](#)

Annual Application Date: 1 November

### **Selection Results First Round ECTS Label 1 November 2003**

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Number of applications: 91

Austria 4  
Belgium 15  
Bulgaria 1  
Cyprus 1  
Czech Republic 4  
Germany 5  
Denmark 3  
Estonia 4  
Spain 4  
Finland 15  
France 2  
Hungary 1  
Iceland 1  
Italy 4  
Lithuania 1  
Netherlands 3  
Norway 2  
Poland 5  
Portugal 5  
Romania 2  
Sweden 3  
Slovak Republic 1  
Turkey 3  
United Kingdom 2

Selected institutions: 10

3 Belgian and 2 Finnish institutions have been selected for the award as well as one from each of the following countries: Austria, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Spain. These institutions have impressed the evaluating experts by a very good implementation of the ECTS in all first and second cycle degree programmes, a user-friendly Information Package/Course Catalogue in the local language and in English (in hard copy or on the web) and transparent recognition documents in the form of Learning Agreements, Transcripts of Records and Proofs of Recognition.

The spread is more or less even between universities and polytechnics/colleges/universities of applied sciences. Moreover, both larger and smaller institutions were able to submit successful applications. These results indicate that the award of the Label is, in reality, possible for any higher education institution.

#### Most common reasons for unsuccessful applications

The low number of prospective Label holders (10) may initially come as a shock, although the rather straightforward reasons for rejection ought to give rise to optimism: Most institutions ruled themselves out by submitting incomplete applications, a problem that could be solved without much ado during the next round. Failure to submit a course catalogue in one or both of the required languages, to recognise study periods fully and appropriately, or to use the credits correctly were but a few examples leading to ineligibility. The requirements and application guidelines are clearly stated in several Commission documents (the Label application form and the ECTS Key features brochure can be found on the Commission's web pages). This means that the institutions concerned could easily be awarded the Label, if they follow the guidelines carefully.

#### List of Institutions with the ECTS Label

29283 Technische Universitaet Graz, AT

28084 Faculté Universitaire des Sciences Agronomiques de Gembloux, BE

103466 University of Antwerp, BE

27910 Universiteit Gent, BE

38034 Universidad de Deusto, ES

29323 Arcada –Nylands Svenska Yrkeshogskola, FI

29580 Lappeenranta University of Technology FI

29646 Hogskolen i Agder, NO

43404 Agricultural University of Wroclaw, PL

29154 University of Aveiro PT

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***Will failure to comply with a few items on the checklist exclude my institution from the label?***

You should follow the checklist completely as all elements listed are considered relevant for potential students and partners from within your country and from abroad.



***If one out of a series of degree programmes is not covered in the Information Package/Course Catalogue, will that exclude my institution from the label?***

Yes, in that case you should apply with a complete application next year.

***Not all departments in my institution are active in student mobility; will that exclude my institution from applying for the label?***

No, it is not necessary for all your departments to be active in student mobility. You may still apply for the label and provide the requested documents for a sample of departments which do have student mobility.

## DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT

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[Diploma Supplement : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[Diploma Supplement Checklist](#)

[Diploma Supplement Label Criteria](#)

[Diploma Supplement Label Application Procedure](#)

[Selection Results First Round DS Label 1 November 2003](#)

[Application Form for the Diploma Supplement Label](#)

[List of Institutions with the DS Label](#)

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The Diploma Supplement is an annex, an explanatory note attached to a diploma awarded by a higher education institution. It helps to explain the diploma which may often be understood only within the country concerned. When fully completed this document provides all the information necessary to make a valid assessment of any degree or qualification.

The Supplement should be issued to every student of every type of degree programme, upon graduation, together with their official diploma, free of charge, in a widely spoken European language.

Institutions should disseminate information regarding the purpose and content of the Diploma Supplement among their own students as well as to local organisations, employers and other interested persons.

In this connection, the EUROPASS initiative<sup>4</sup> of the Commission should be noted. The Commission proposes to integrate the different transparency instruments developed for vocational training (like the European Portfolio and the European CV) and bring them together in a single European Framework for Transparency of Qualifications and Competences, which would include the Diploma Supplement.

### Diploma Supplement Checklist

Each Diploma Supplement should start with the following preamble:

*“This Diploma Supplement follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international “transparency” and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value-judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.”*

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.lex.unict.it/cde/documenti/vari/2004/040107europass\\_en.pdf](http://www.lex.unict.it/cde/documenti/vari/2004/040107europass_en.pdf)

And continue with the following eight sections:

**1 Information identifying the holder of the qualification**

- 1.1 Family name(s):
- 1.2 Given name(s):
- 1.3 Date of birth: (day/month/year):
- 1.4 Student identification number or code: (if available)

**2 Information identifying the qualification**

- 2.1 Name of qualification and *(if applicable)* title conferred *(in original language)*:
- 2.2 Main fields(s) of study for the qualification:
- 2.3 Name and status of awarding institution *(in original language)*:
- 2.4. Name and type of institution (if different from 2.3) administering studies *(in original language)*:
- 2.5 Language(s) of instruction/examination:

**3 Information on the level of the qualification**

- 3.1 Level of qualification:
- 3.2 Official length of programme:
- 3.3 Access requirements(s):

**4 Information on the contents and results gained**

- 4.1 Mode of study:
- 4.2 Programme requirements:
- 4.3 Programme details: (e.g. modules or units studied), and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained: *(if this information is available on an official transcript this should be used here)*
- 4.4 Grading scheme and, if available, grade distribution guidance:
- 4.5 Overall classification of the qualification *(in original language)*:

**5 Information on the function of the qualification**

- 5.1 Access to further study:
- 5.2 Professional status *(if applicable)*:

**6 Additional information**

- 6.1 Additional information:
- 6.2 Further information sources:

**7 Certification of the supplement**

- 7.1 Date:
- 7.2 Signature:
- 7.3 Capacity:
- 7.4 Official stamp or seal:

**8 Information on the national higher education system(s)**

*(N.B. Institutions who intend to issue Diploma Supplements should refer to the explanatory notes that explain how to complete them.)*

## **Explanatory notes on completing supplements**

(The numbers below refer to the numbered sections in the Diploma Supplement)

### **1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification**

1.1 Provide the full family or surname.

1.2 Include all given/first names.

1.3 Indicate day, month and year of birth.

1.4 This should identify the individual as a student enrolled on the particular programme which is covered by the Diploma Supplement. A national or State personal identification number could be included for those countries that have such systems of identification.

### **2. Information identifying the qualification**

2.1 Give the full name of the qualification in the original language as it is styled in the original qualification e.g. *Kandidat nauk, Maîtrise, Diplom*, etc. If the qualification is a dual award this should be stated. Indicate if the award confers any nationally accepted title on the holder and what this title is e.g. *Doctor, Ingénieur* etc. Indicate if the title is protected in law.

2.2 Show only the major field(s) of study (disciplines) that define the main subject area(s) for the qualification e.g. *Politics and History, Human Resource Management, Business Administration, Molecular Biology* etc.

2.3 Indicate the name of the institution awarding the qualification. This is often, but not always, the same as the institution administering the studies and delivering the programme (see 2.4 below). Qualifications may be delivered by a sub-contracted institution that has been given a 'franchise' or some type of 'accreditation' by a senior competent authority. This might be the state, a university or a professional institution. Sometimes the senior authority may be a foreign institution. If this is the case it should be indicated here. Also indicate the status of the awarding institution: Private/Independent, Private and State recognised, State, and if applicable who it is accredited by etc. Finally, indicate the general national educational classification of the awarding institution e.g. *University, Fachhochschule, Professional Body, Technical College, Grande Ecole* etc. If there is a difference between the awarding institution and the institution delivering the qualification indicate the status of both.

2.4 This refers to the institution which is responsible for the delivery of the programme. In some cases this can be different from the institution awarding the qualification (see 2.3 above). Also indicate the status of the institution delivering the studies: Private/Independent, Private and State recognised, State, and if applicable who it is accredited by etc. Finally, indicate the general national educational classification of the administering institution e.g. *College of Higher Education, Private Institute* etc.

2.5 Indicate the language(s) by which the qualification was delivered and examined.

### 3. Information on the level of the qualification

3.1 Give the precise level of qualification and its place in the specific national educational structure of awards (explained and cross-referenced to the information in section eight). The local educational framework should be explained, e.g. *University Undergraduate/Postgraduate, Baccalaureate* + x years etc. Include any relevant information on 'level indicators' that are nationally devised and recognised and which relate to the qualification.

3.2 Explain the official duration of the programme in weeks or years and the actual workload including information on any major sub-components i.e. practical training. Preferably, the workload should be expressed in terms of total student effort required. This consists of the normal designated time on the programme including taught classes and private study, examinations etc. This can be expressed as x hours per week for x weeks, or just by using the normal local description of the length e.g. one year full-time study.

3.3 List or explain the nature and length of access qualification(s) or periods of study required for access to the programme described by this Diploma Supplement e.g. *Bachelor Degree, Baccalaureate* etc. This is particularly important when intermediate studies are a prerequisite to the named qualification.

### 4. Information on the contents and results gained

4.1 The mode of study refers to how the programme was undertaken e.g. Full-time, Part-time, Intermittent/Sandwich, Distance, including Placements etc.

4.2 If applicable, provide details of the regulations covering the minimum standards required to secure the qualification, e.g. any compulsory components or compulsory practical elements, whether all elements have to be passed simultaneously, any thesis/dissertation regulations etc. Include details of any particular features that help define the qualification, especially information on the requirements for successfully passing it. If available, provide details of the learning outcomes, skills, competencies and stated aims and objectives associated with the qualification.

4.3 Give details of each of the individual elements or parts of the qualification and their weighting. List the actual marks and/or grades obtained in each major component of the qualification. Entries should be as complete as possible and in accordance with what is normally recorded at the institution concerned. Cover all examinations and assessed components and/or fields of study offered in examination, including any dissertation or thesis. Indicate if the latter were defended or not. All this information is often available in the form of a transcript (a useful format for transcripts was developed for the European Credit Transfer System [ECTS]). Many credit-based systems employ detailed transcripts that can be integrated into the wider framework of the Diploma Supplement. If information on the credit allocation between course components and units is available it should be included.

4.4 Provide information on the grading scheme and pass marks relating to the qualification e.g. marks are out of a possible 100% and the minimum pass mark is 40%. Tremendous variations in grading practices exist within and between different national higher education institutions and countries. A mark of 70% in some academic cultures is highly regarded

whilst in other countries it is regarded as average or poor. Information on the use and distribution of grades relating to the qualification in question should be included.

4.5 If appropriate, indicate the overall classification for the final qualification i.e. *First Class Honours Degree, Summa Cum Laude, Merit, Avec Distinction* etc.

## 5. Information on the function of the qualification

5.1 Indicate if within the country of origin, the qualification normally provides access to further academic and/or professional study, especially leading to any specific qualifications, or levels of study e.g. access to Doctoral studies in Hungary. If this is the case, specify the grades or standards that have to be obtained to allow progression. Indicate if the qualification is a terminal (end) award or part of a hierarchy of awards.

5.2 Give details of any rights to practise, or professional status accorded to the holders of the qualification. What specific access, if any, does the qualification give in terms of employment or professional practice and indicate which competent authority allows this. Indicate if the qualification gives access to a 'regulated profession'.

## 6. Additional information

6.1 Add any additional information not included above but relevant to the purposes of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification e.g. the qualification involved a period of study/training in another institution/company/country and/or, include further relevant details about the higher education institution where the qualification was taken.

6.2 Indicate any further useful information sources and references where more details on the qualification could be sought e.g. the higher education institution web site; the department in the issuing institution; a national information centre; the European Union National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC); the Council of Europe/UNESCO European National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility (ENIC).

## 7. Certification of the supplement

7.1 The date the Diploma Supplement was issued. This would not necessarily be the same date the qualification was awarded.

7.2 The name and signature of the official certifying the Diploma Supplement.

7.3 The official post of the certifying individual.

7.4 The official stamp or seal of the institution that provides authentication of the Diploma Supplement.

## 8. Information on the national higher education system

Give information on the higher educational system: its general access requirements; types of institution and the qualifications structure. This description should provide a context for the qualification and refer to it. A standard framework for these descriptions together with actual descriptions should be available for many countries.

These are being created as a follow-up to this project and with the co-operation of the relevant National (European Union and European Economic Area) Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), European (Council of Europe/UNESCO) National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC), Ministries and Rectors' conferences.

## **Diploma Supplement Label Criteria**

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A Diploma Supplement Label will be awarded to institutions issuing the Diploma Supplement correctly to every student, upon graduation, together with the diploma, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language.

Institutions from all Bologna Signatory States may apply for the DS label. Assessment of applications from other countries is not excluded but can not be guaranteed at this stage.

Institutions must provide samples of actual Diploma Supplements as well as public information from the Institution explaining that the Diploma Supplement is being issued to every graduate. Applications which do not contain a complete set of the documents requested in the Diploma Supplement Label Application Form will not be assessed.

The list of institutions in possession of the label is published on the web. Obtaining the Label will contribute to the image of the institution concerned showing that it is a reliable partner in European and international cooperation.

The samples and information provided will be assessed by the European Commission with the assistance of independent experts. The DS Label will be valid for a period of three years. During that period ECTS/DS Counsellors may undertake site visits and where it is evident that the requirements are not being fulfilled, the DS Label may be withdrawn. The criteria and procedures for cases of withdrawal of the DS Label will be published on the Commission web pages.

## **Application Procedure for the Diploma Supplement Label**

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[Application Form for the Diploma Supplement Label](#)

Annual Application Date: 1 November.

## **Selection Results First Round DS Label 1 November 2003**

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Number of applications: 85

Austria 1

Belgium 4

Czech Republic 1

Germany 6

Denmark 9

Estonia 1  
 Finland 12  
 France 1  
 Netherlands 2  
 Norway 25  
 Poland 1  
 Portugal 1  
 Sweden 17  
 Slovenia 1  
 Turkey 3

#### Selected institutions: 28

Judging from the amount of successful applications (33%), it is evident that the requirements for the Diploma Supplement Label are considerably easier to fulfil than those for the ECTS Label.

One of the smallest Bologna countries, Norway, produced half of the successful applications. The Nordic countries are together responsible for over 75% of the awards, with Sweden and Finland receiving 3 each and Denmark 2. Germany submitted 2 successful applications and Austria, Estonia, Poland and Portugal were able to gain one award each.

Norway's success may be attributed to its Ministry, which issued a letter requesting that all universities/university colleges start using the Diploma Supplement immediately. By the end of 2001 all institutions had developed the supplement and started issuing it automatically.

#### Most common reasons for unsuccessful applications

As with the ECTS applications, the most pertinent problem is rather easy to solve: Unsuccessful applicants failed to follow the guidelines set out in the explanatory notes and thus did not provide the required information in all eight sections of the supplement. The most frequent omissions were under section 4 ("information on the contents and results gained"). This was particularly the case for the "programme details" under subsection 4.3 (e.g. modules or units studied), and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained. Most of the institutions concerned announced annexes by way of filling in the relevant sections, but they did not submit any such material to support their application. Failure to supply information on the "national higher education system" under section 8 equally led to the rejection of a considerable number of applications.

#### List of Institutions with the DS Label

28505 PÄDAGOGISCHE AKADEMIE DES BUNDES IN NÖ, AT  
 28375 FACHHOCHSCHULE STRALSUND, DE  
 28749 HANDELSHOCHSCHULE LEIPZIG GMBH, DE  
 28824 SYDDANSK UNIVERSITET, DK  
 101822 DANMARKS PÆDAGOGISKE UNIVERSITET, DK  
 64947 ESTONIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL, EE  
 29497 OULUN SEUDUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU, FI  
 29560 TAMPEREEN YLIOPISTO, FI



29574 LAUREA-AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU, FI  
 29625 HØGSKOLEN I BODØ, NO  
 29627 HØGSKOLEN I LILLEHAMMER, NO  
 29642 HØGSKOLEN I NARVIK, NO  
 29643 UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN, NO  
 29646 HØGSKOLEN I AGDER, NO  
 29650 NORGES VETERINÆRHØGSKOLE, NO  
 29652 HØGSKOLEN I NORD-TRØNDELAGE, NO  
 29654 HØGSKOLEN I TROMSØ, NO  
 29684 HØGSKOLEN I SØR-TRØNDELAGE, NO  
 29714 UNIVERSITETET I OSLO, NO  
 29724 UNIVERSITETET I TROMSØ, NO  
 29726 HØGSKOLEN I MOLDE, NO  
 100293 HØGSKOLEN I GJØVIK, NO  
 218548 HØGSKOLEN I ÅLESUND, NO  
 68668 WYŻSZA SZKOŁA HUMANISTYCZNO-EKONOMICZNA W ŁODZI, PL  
 29238 UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO, PT  
 29350 UPPSALA UNIVERSITET, SE  
 29369 MÄLARDALENS HÖGSKOLA, SE  
 29375 VÄXJÖ UNIVERSITET, SE

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***Is the use of ECTS Credits on the Diploma Supplement obliged?***

No, but it is strongly recommended. It is good practice to insert an ECTS Transcript of Records of the complete studies of the graduate under point 4.3 of the Diploma Supplement. The inclusion of ECTS credit will contribute to the transparency of the information provided in the Supplement.

#### ***Is the Diploma Supplement label linked to the ECTS label?***

No. Each Label can be obtained separately. However it is strongly recommended that both ECTS and Diploma Supplement introduced using appropriate shared informatics support, as the data required for the two tools is similar and can be collected, collated, stored and made accessible for both uses. Hence it will be easy to apply for both Labels at the same time.

#### ***Is it possible to award a Diploma supplement without the information on the components, courses, modules or units studied as explained in section 4.3?***

No, such a document would not be an official Diploma Supplement.

## **GLOSSARY**

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### **ASSESSMENT**

The total range of written, oral and practical tests/examinations, projects and portfolios, used to evaluate the student's progress in the course unit or module, form an assessment. These measures may be used by the students to evaluate their own progress (formative assessment) or by the institution to judge whether the student has achieved the learning outcomes of the course unit or module (summative assessment).

### **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

Descriptions of what the learner is expected to do, in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved.

### **COHORT**

The group of students that started a particular degree programme in the same year is known as a cohort.

### **COMPETENCES**

Competences represent a dynamic combination of attributes, abilities and attitudes. Fostering these competences is the object of educational programmes. Competences are formed in various course units and assessed at different stages. They may be divided in subject-area related competences (specific to a field of study) and generic competences (common to any degree course).

### **CONDONING**

Condoning is the term used when an examination board exempts a student from reassessment in a failed module if the other related modules are passed with sufficiently high marks.

### **CONTACT HOUR**

A period of 45-60 minutes of teaching contact between a staff member and a student or group of students is defined as a contact hour.

### **CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT**

Continuous assessment refers to the situation where assessment as described above takes place within the normal teaching period and contributes to the final assessment.

### **CONVERGENCE**

Convergence involves the voluntary adoption of suitable policies for the achievement of a common goal. Convergence in the architecture of national educational systems is pursued in the Bologna process.

### **COURSE UNIT or MODULE**

A self-contained, formally structured learning experience. It should have a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of competences to be obtained, and appropriate assessment criteria.

### **COURSEWORK**

Coursework defines required tasks within a course unit or module.

## **CREDIT**

In the case of ECTS, a credit is a unit used to measure student workload in terms of time.

## **CREDIT ACCUMULATION**

In a credit accumulation system a specified number of credits must be obtained in order to complete successfully a semester, academic year or a full study programme, according to the requirements of the programme. Credits are awarded and accumulated only when the successful achievement of the required learning outcomes is confirmed by assessment.

## **CREDIT FRAMEWORK**

A system that facilitates the measurement and comparison of learning outcomes achieved in the context of different qualifications, programmes of study and learning environments on the basis of student workload measured in time.

## **CREDIT LEVEL**

Credit level is an indicator of the relative demands of learning and of learner autonomy. It can be based on the year of study and/or on the type of course content (for example, Basic/Advanced/Specialised).

## **CREDIT TYPE**

Credit type provides an indicator of the status of a course unit or modules in the study programme. It can for example be described as Core (major course unit), Related (unit providing instrument/support) or Minor (optional course unit).

## **CYCLE**

A cycle is a course of study leading to an academic degree. One of the objectives indicated in the Bologna Declaration is the "adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate." Doctoral studies are now generally referred to as the third cycle.

## **DEGREE / DIPLOMA**

Degree describes the qualification awarded by a higher education institution after successful completion of a prescribed study programme. In a credit accumulation system the programme is completed through the accumulation of a specified number of credits awarded for the achievement of a specific set of learning outcomes.

## **DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT**

The Diploma Supplement is an annex to the official degree/qualification designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the holder of the degree/qualification. It is based on the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. It improves international transparency and the academic/professional recognition of qualifications.

## **DOCTORATE or DOCTORAL DEGREE**

A high level qualification which is internationally recognised as qualifying someone for research or academic work may be designated as a doctorate or doctoral degree. It will include a substantial amount of original research work which is presented in a thesis. It generally refers to the degree awarded after completion of third cycle studies.

**ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)**

ECTS is a system for increasing the transparency of educational systems and facilitating the mobility of students across Europe through credit transfer. It is based on the general assumption that the global workload of an academic year of study is equal to 60 credits. The 60 credits are then allocated to course units or modules to describe the proportion of the student workload required for achievement of the related learning outcomes. Credit transfer is guaranteed by explicit agreements signed by the home institution, the host institution and the mobile student.

**EXAMINATION (EXAM)**

The term examination normally refers to a formal written and/or oral test taken at the end of a course unit or module or later in the academic year. Other assessment methods are also in use. Tests within the course unit or module are classed as continuous assessment if they contribute to the final assessment.

**FIRST DEGREE**

A first cycle qualification, as defined by the Bologna Declaration, normally awarded after successful completion of a minimum of three years or 180 ECTS credits is designated a first degree.

**GRADE**

A final evaluation based on the overall performance within an individual course unit or module in the study programme.

**GRADUATE STUDIES**

A course of study undertaken after completion of a first degree and which normally leads to a second cycle degree.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education applies to programmes of study that may be entered by students holding either an appropriate school leaving certificate from an upper secondary school after, in general, twelve years of schooling or other relevant professional qualifications or other approved prior learning and/or prior experience. Providers may be universities, universities of professional studies, higher education institutions, colleges, polytechnics etc.

**ICT TEACHING**

ICT teaching includes teaching/studying/learning that make use of information and communication technology. It usually takes place in e-learning environments.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes must be accompanied by appropriate assessment criteria which can be used to judge that the expected learning outcomes have been achieved. Learning outcomes, together with assessment criteria, specify the requirements for the award of credit, while marking is based on attainment above or below the requirements for the award of credit. Credit accumulation and transfer is facilitated if clear learning outcomes are available to indicate with precision the achievements for which the credit will be awarded.

**LEARNING TIME**

The number of hours an average student will need to achieve specified learning outcomes and gain credits to be awarded after assessment.

### **MARK**

A mark is any numerical or qualitative measure used to describe the results of assessment in an individual course unit or within a well-defined scale.

### **MODULE**

See course unit

### **OPTIONAL COURSE**

A course unit or that may be taken as part of a study programme but is not compulsory for all students is referred to as optional.

### **STUDY PROGRAMME**

An approved set of course units or modules recognised for the award of a specific degree form a study programme and can be defined through the set of learning outcomes to be achieved for the award of a specified number of credits.

### **RECOGNITION**

Recognition within ECTS requires that the credits achieved by a student through successful completion of course units or modules as described in the Learning Agreement at the host university must replace an equivalent number of credits at his/her home institution.

### **RESIT EXAMINATION (EXAM) or ASSESSMENT**

Students who have not been able to take or pass an Examination or assessment on the first date scheduled may be offered the opportunity to take a resit examination or assessment at a later date.

### **SECOND CYCLE DEGREE**

A second cycle degree is a higher education qualification awarded after the successful completion of second cycle studies and may involve some research work. A student normally takes it after completion of a first degree.

### **SKILLS**

Skills are abilities formed in learning activities which can be divided into ‘subject specific’ and ‘generic’.

### **THESIS**

A thesis is a formally presented written report, based on independent research work, which is required for the award of a degree (generally second degree or doctorate).

### **TUNING**

To ‘tune’ means to synchronise a radio on the desired frequency; it means ‘tuning’ the various instruments in an orchestra so that music can be played without unwanted dissonance. In the case of the Tuning Project, it means creating agreed reference points for the organisation of higher education structures in Europe, recognising that the diversity of traditions is a positive factor in the creation of a dynamic common higher education area.

### **TUTORIAL**

A tutorial is a period of instruction given by a tutor aimed at exploring in greater depth, revising and discussing material and topics presented within a course unit or module.

### **UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES**

Undergraduate studies are defined as those normally carried out prior to the award of a first degree.

### **WORKLOAD**

The workload includes all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes (i.e., lectures, practical work, information retrieval, private study, etc.).

## **DOWNLOADABLE STANDARD FORMS + EXAMPLES OF COMPLETED FORMS**

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[Information Package/Course Catalogue : Examples](#)

[ECTS Student Application Form : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[ECTS Learning Agreement : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[ECTS Recognition Sheet : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[ECTS Transcript of Records : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[Diploma Supplement : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[Planning Form for an Educational Module \(teacher\) : Standard form -Completed example](#)

[Form for Checking Workload of an Educational Module \(student\) : Standard form - Completed example](#)

[Proof Recognition : Completed example](#)

[Application form for the ECTS Label](#)

[Application form for the Diploma Supplement Label](#)

[ECTS/DS Counsellors – Bologna Promoters](#)