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Module 6: ECTS

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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Contribution to the programme	The module describes ECTS system. The use of ECTS is based on the principle of mutual trust and confidence between the participating institutions. It is important to highlight that ECTS is compulsorily used in all student mobility activities, having been extended to the cooperation with the third countries.
Pre-requisites:	Module 1-5

Identification and description of the competences to be developed in this module

Generic Competence 1	Defining volume of learning in ECTS credits Description: ECTS helps institutions to shift emphasis in programme design and delivery from traditional teacher-centered approaches to approaches that accommodate for learners' needs and expectations.
Learning Outcomes:	By the end of the module the trainees will be able to:
LO1	- Define volume of learning
LO2	- Explain ECTS features
Specific Competence 1	Implementing and calculating Student workload
Learning Outcomes:	By the end of the module the trainees will be able to:
LO1	- Implement calculation of Student workload
LO2	- Calculate Student workload
Specific Competence 2	Assigning ECTS credit
Learning Outcomes:	By the end of the module the trainees will be able to:
LO1	- assign ECTS credit
LO2	- explain and plan ECTS credit accumulation, progression and transfer

Student work plan

COMPETENCE	CONTENTS
Defining volume of learning in ECTS credits	1. ECTS CREDITS AS VOLUME OF LEARNING 1.1 ECTS 1.2 RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE VALUE OF CREDITS 1.3 TYPES OF PROGRAMMES 1.4 ECTS AS AN ACCUMULATION SYSTEM 1.5 CREDITS AND THE LENGTH OF A DEGREE PROGRAMME
Implementing and calculating Student workload	2. ALLOCATION OF CREDITS TO COURSES 2.1 STUDENT WORKLOAD 2.2 STUDENT-ORIENTED VERSUS TEACHER-ORIENTED PROGRAMMES OF STUDIES 3. CALCULATION OF CREDITS IN TERMS OF WORKLOAD 3.1 THE DEFINITION OF CREDITS
Assigning ECTS credit	3.2 ESTIMATING AVERAGE WORKLOAD AND PERFORMANCE 3.3 METHODS OF CALCULATING WORKLOAD

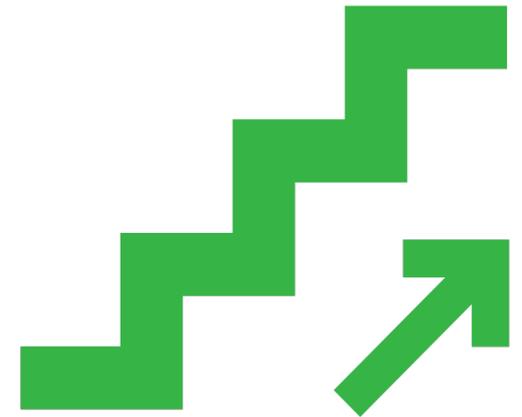
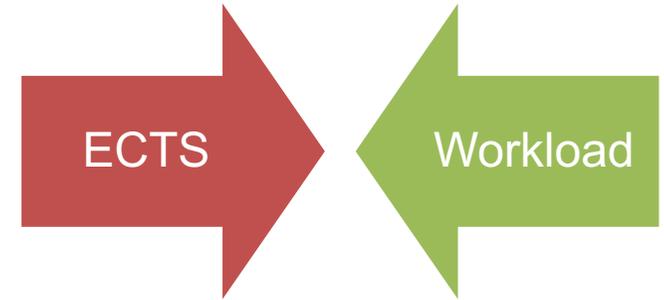
Introduction

This module aims to offer more insight into the relation between ECTS and workload. The starting point is to recognise that in general the design and the implementation of a course of study leading to a recognised qualification or degree is based on a number of elements of which we mention here the following:

- The total number of ECTS required and its distribution over the several activities (such as the teaching/learning units; the thesis work, the comprehensive examination, etc.) involved in the qualification;
- The actual academic contents offered to the students.

An understanding is needed:

1. The role of ECTS
2. Course credit allocation
3. Credits and level
4. Calculation of workload credits
5. Comparison of the length of the school year in Europe
6. Relation between workload, teaching methods and learning outcomes



1. ECTS CREDITS AS VOLUME OF LEARNING

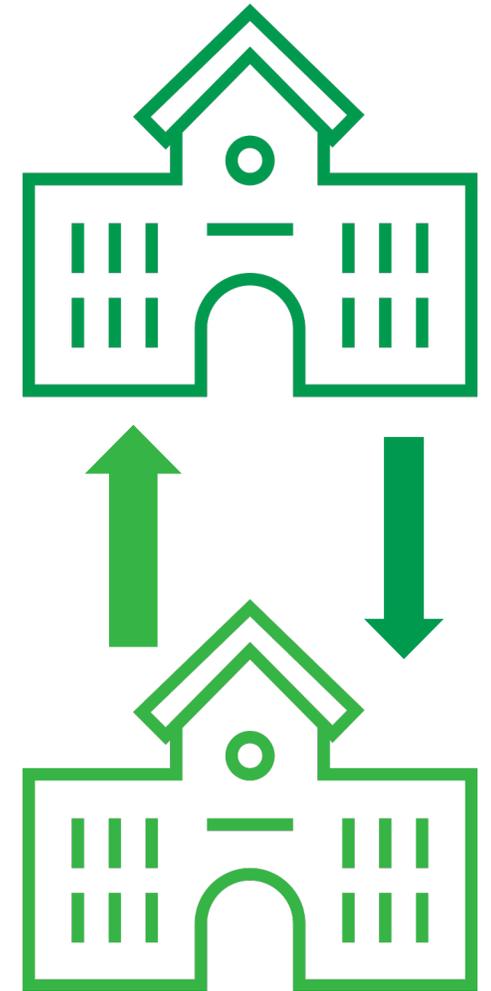
1.1 ECTS

During the period 1989-1995 the European Commission developed the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) , in close collaboration with some 145 higher education institutions

The strength and attraction of ECTS is and was:

- its simplicity;
- its overarching capability of bridging educational systems on a national as well as on an international basis.

It was agreed, from the very start, that study periods completed successfully at other institutions should only be recognised on the basis of prior agreements between academic staff about level, content and load of course units

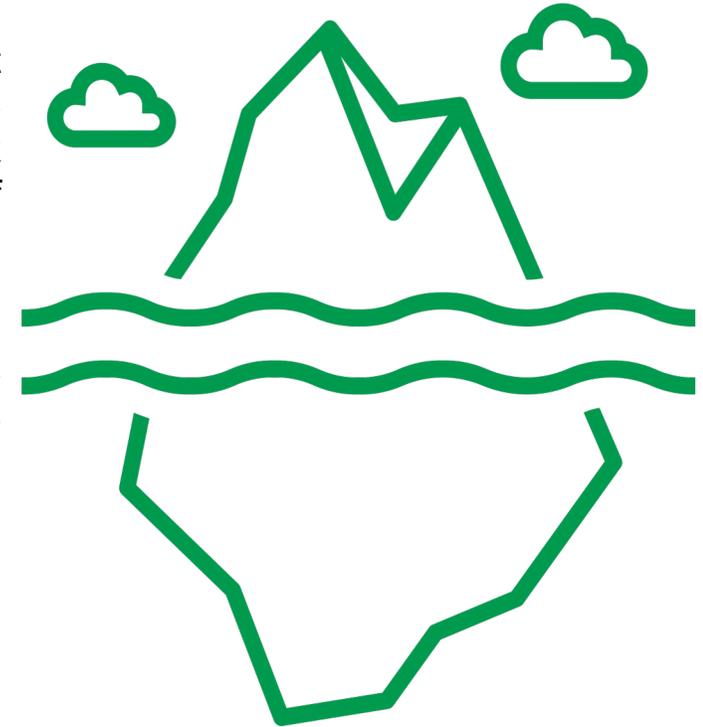


1. ECTS CREDITS AS VOLUME OF LEARNING

1.2 Relative and absolute value of credits

In the information material which was distributed about the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), it is stated that credits allocated to courses are relative values reflecting the quantity of work each course demands in relation to the total quantity of work required to complete a full year of academic study at a given institution . The question of whether this approach is not too simple must now be raised.

Italy and Germany were identified as the two countries with most difficulties in applying the system. Germany , because it did not have a clearly described study programme for many disciplines, and Italy because there did not seem to be a real relation between the official and actual length of study programmes.



1. ECTS CREDITS AS VOLUME OF LEARNING

1.3 Types of programmes

Sometimes a distinction is made between regular programmes and extra challenging programmes .

In cases the prescribed study programme should be based on the assumption that an academic regular year counts a total number of 60 credits. This makes clear that although credits always represent workload and are only given on the basis of successful assessment, the standard of the work, i.e. the performance achieved by the student in order to gain them, may be different. This follows from the fact that there are not only different types of education (i.e. teaching and learning methods/traditions), but also different learning performances within the same type of education.



2. ALLOCATION OF CREDITS TO COURSES

2.1 Student workload

ECTS was designed as a credit system based on student workload.

The same teaching load may correspond to different student workloads. In a number of countries the situation is complicated by the fact that the contents of the curricula to a large extent are decided at central government level: there is a fixed list of subjects which has to be taught. This approach leads to rather rigid course structures and a fair allocation of credits becomes problematic.



2. ALLOCATION OF CREDITS TO COURSES

2.2 Student-oriented versus teacher-oriented programmes of studies

Educational systems can be described as being more teacher-oriented or more student-oriented. The teacher-oriented approach is generally time independent, based on the assumption that the proper object of study is what the individual professor thinks the student should learn in his or her course.

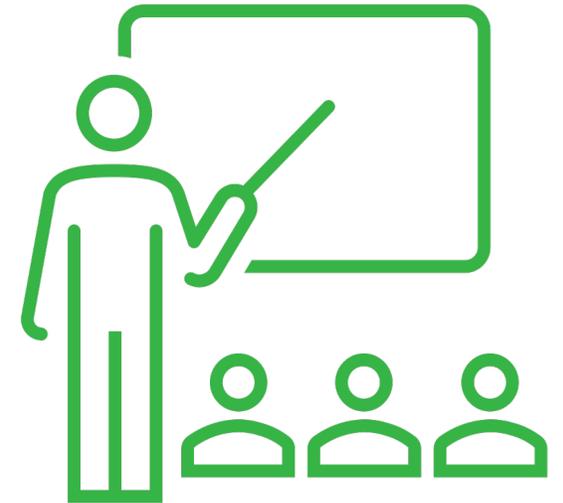
When determining the number of credits required for a particular set of learning outcomes and degree programme specifications, allowance must be made for differing prior knowledge, skills and competences, acquired before entering university.



3. CALCULATION OF CREDITS IN TERMS OF WORKLOAD

The actual calculation of credits in terms of workload has proven to be a difficult issue. First of all it should be clear what is meant by credits.

- Credit is a measure of student workload based on the time necessary to complete a given teaching/learning unit
- 60 ECTS credits measures the workload of a typical student during one academic year
- The number of hours of student work (that is, of the typical student) required to achieve a given set of learning outcomes (on a given level) depends on student ability, teaching and learning methods, teaching and learning resources, curriculum design. These can differ between universities in a given country and between countries
- Since credits, whether relative or absolute are, hence, only a measure of workload within a curriculum, credits can only be used as a planning or monitoring tool when the curriculum itself has been defined. In order to create, modify or evaluate a curriculum, general and specific learning outcomes must be agreed upon



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