



ECTS Users' Guide



New for the 2015 Guide

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

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

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

Takes into account recent developments in the Bologna Process such as the:

- establishment of the EHEA
- consolidation of lifelong learning
- shift from teacher-centred to student-centred higher education
- increasing use of learning outcomes
- development of new modes of learning and teaching

**Learner-centred
system**

**Mobility
supporting
documents**

ECTS key features

**Learning
outcomes;
workload**

**Recognition of
prior learning;
Lifelong learning**

**Credits:
allocation, award,
accumulation,
transfer**

ECTS programme design

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

- Programme context
- Programme profile
- Learning outcomes
- Programme structure
- Assessment
- Monitoring



<http://europa.eu/!pv36cM>

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

ECTS programme design

Programme context

In the **QF-EHEA** there are three main cycles, as well as a short cycle, which are all worth ECTS credits:

- Short cycle: 120 ECTS credits
- First cycle: 180 or 240 ECTS credits
- Second cycle: 90 or 120 ECTS credits
- Third cycle: Varies

QFs

There are two European Qualifications Frameworks:

- The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (**QF-EHEA**)
- The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the EU (**EQF-LLL**)

ECTS programme design

Learning outcomes

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

Guidelines

Learning outcomes should:

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

Formulation

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

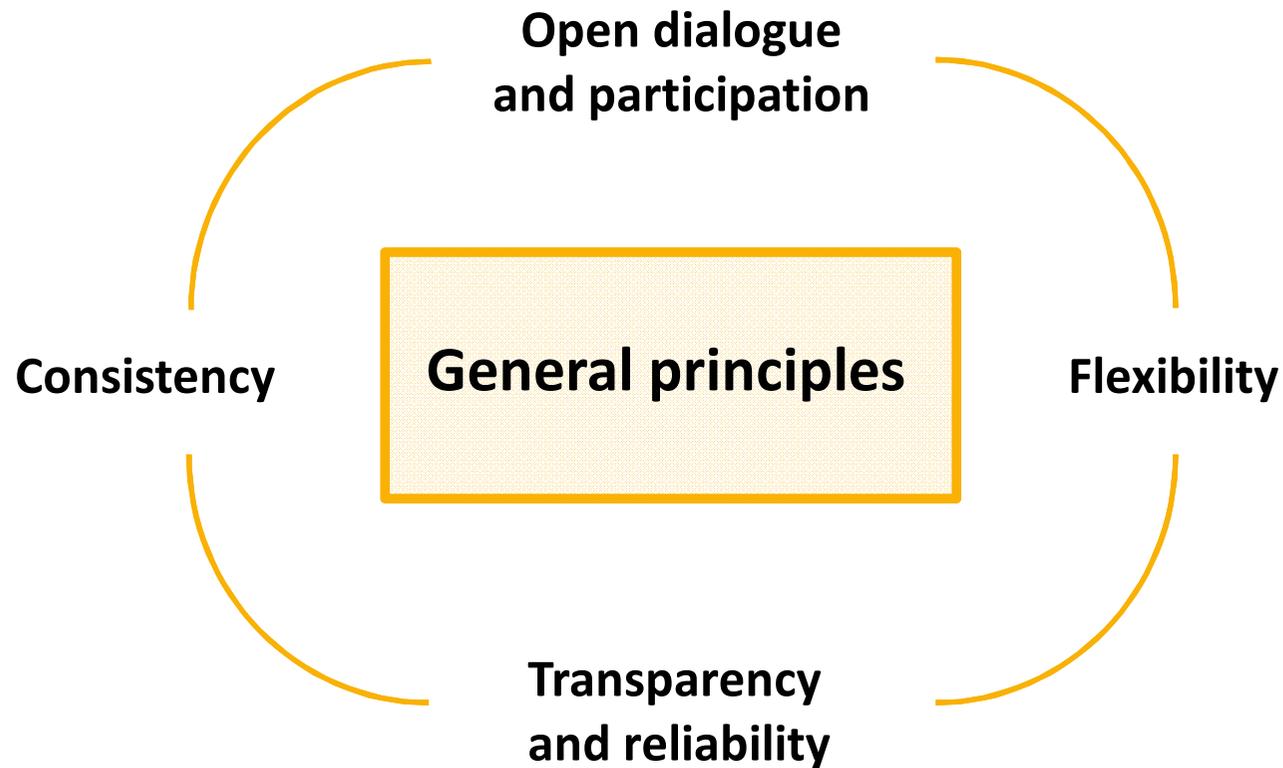
ECTS programme design

Programme structure

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

ECTS programme design

Assessment and award of credits



ECTS Programme design

Monitoring

- Are credit allocation, defined learning outcomes and estimated workload achievable, realistic and adequate?
- Methods: questionnaires, focus groups, interviews or results achieved
- Feedback from students, staff and stakeholders
- Revision to the workload, credits, learning outcomes or learning and teaching activities and methods if necessary

Study abroad with ECTS

Degree mobility

- Degree programmes can vary in the number of ECTS credits they include
- The programme learning outcomes should be the main factor taken into account for the purposes of recognising qualifications for further studies
- The Lisbon Recognition Convention (1999) provides a legal framework for cross-border recognition
- Substantial differences are differences between the foreign qualification and the national qualification that are so significant that they would most likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in the desired activity (further study, research activities or employment)

Study abroad with ECTS

Credit mobility

Key supporting documents:

- Course Catalogue
- Learning Agreement
- Transcript of Records
- Traineeship Certificate

“The two most relevant documents for a student that is planning to go abroad are the Course Catalogue and the Learning Agreement”

– Stefan Jahnke,
Erasmus Student Network

Grade distribution

- European HEIs have different grading scales and passing rates
- Mobility students have the right to a fair conversion of the grades they've obtained during a period of study abroad
- Each HEI should produce a grading table for each degree course within a specific subject area
- This will help ensure the transparency of the grading culture and the accurate conversion of grades for mobility students



<http://europa.eu/!kk38Jb>

Grade distribution

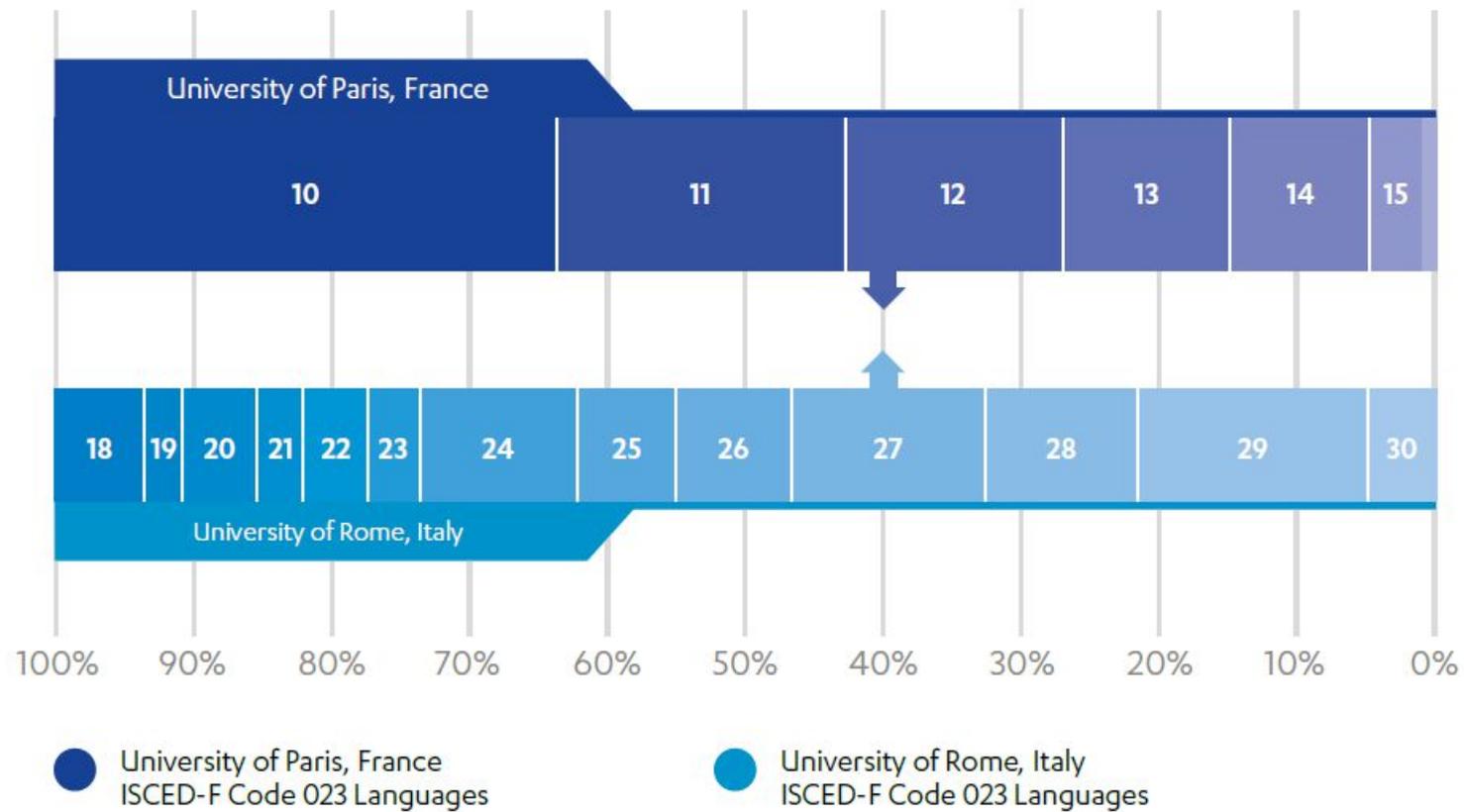
Grading table example

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

* Grading systems/approaches may be established at national level.

Grade conversion

Grading conversion table example



ECTS and lifelong learning

- Changing higher education landscape: more diversified student group, need for more flexible learning opportunities, individual learning pathways and different modes of learning, including digital and online technologies
- ECTS can be used in all lifelong learning contexts regardless of the mode, location or country
- Open learning: providers of all 'formally' quality assured higher education courses are encouraged to use ECTS



<http://europa.eu/!HG34Yk>

ECTS and lifelong learning

Recognition of prior learning experience

- HEIs should develop recognition policies for learning outcomes acquired outside the formal learning context, provided these learning outcomes satisfy the requirements of the qualification or its components
- After appropriate assessment, the same number of ECTS credits as attached to the corresponding part of the formal programme should be awarded
- Appropriate staff and transparent methods
- Advice to learners, counselling opportunities

ECTS and quality assurance

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

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

Evaluation indicators

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