



The Portuguese and the European HE systems The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

ipb.pt/icm



The Bologna Process and the EHEA:

The **Bologna Process** is an European reform process aimed at creating the **European Higher Education Area (EHEA)** based on **international cooperation and academic exchange** that is attractive to **European students and staff** as well as to students and staff from **other parts of the world**.

The Bologna Process and the EHEA:

The Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999 by 29 European countries; nowadays implemented in 48 states, which define the EHEA.

- ✓ Easily readable and comparable degrees organised in a **three-cycle structure (Bachelor-Master-PhD)**.
- ✓ **Mobility**: promoting intra-European and international student and staff mobility.
- ✓ **Recognition of qualifications**: using tools that facilitate the recognition of qualifications - the **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)** and the **Diploma Supplement (DS)**.
- ✓ **Quality assurance**: the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (2008) lists the national agencies which operate in accordance with the **European Standards and Guidelines**. The Register aims to increase **confidence** and **transparency** regarding quality assurance in higher education.

The EHEA and the ECTS:

Within the EHEA, the **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)** increases the **transparency** and **readability** of the educational process and thus plays an effective role in stimulating **change and modernisation**, because its implementation encourages *the paradigm shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach*.

The EHEA and the ECTS:

Student-Centred Learning (SCL) is a process of qualitative transformation for students, aimed at enhancing their **autonomy** and **critical ability** through an **outcome-based approach**:

- ✓ Reliance on **active** rather than passive learning;
- ✓ Emphasis on **critical and analytical learning and understanding**;
- ✓ Increased **responsibility and accountability** on the part of the student;
- ✓ Increased **autonomy** of the student;
- ✓ A **reflective approach to the learning and teaching process** on the part of both the student and the teacher.

Some practical consequences of the Bologna process at the European HEIs' study plans:

- ✓ **Less contact hours**, particularly for lectures;
- ✓ **More student self-study** (with tutoring);
- ✓ **More practice** (experimental work, project and internship);
- ✓ **Innovation in teaching** (problem-based and project-based learning).

The ECTS:

- ✓ ECTS is a credit system designed to make it easier for **students to move between different countries**.
- ✓ Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can **transfer their ECTS credits from one university to another** so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training.
- ✓ ECTS helps to **make learning more student-centred**. It is a central tool in the Bologna Process, which aims to **make national systems more compatible**.
- ✓ ECTS also helps with the planning, delivery and evaluation of **study programmes**, and makes them **more transparent**.

ECTS key features:

- ✓ **ECTS credits** express the volume of learning based on the defined **learning outcomes** and their associated **workload**.
- ✓ **Learning outcomes** are statements of what the student knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes at a whole.
- ✓ **Workload** is an estimation of the time the student typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, internship and individual study required to achieved the defined learning outcomes:
 - The workload of **1 full-time academic year** = **60 ECTS credits**
 - The workload of **1 full-time semester** = **30 ECTS credits**
 - **1 full-time academic year** = **1,500 to 1,800 hours of work**
 - **1 ECTS credit** = **25 to 30 hours of work**

ECTS key features:

- ✓ **Accumulation of credits** in ECTS is the process of **collecting credits** awarded for achieving the learning outcomes of educational components. Students can **accumulate credits** in order to **obtain qualifications** (as required by the **degree-awarding** institution) and to document personal achievements for **lifelong learning** purposes.
- ✓ **Transfer of credits** is the process of having credits awarded in one context (programme, institution) **recognised** in another formal context for the purpose of **obtaining a qualification**.

Credits awarded to students in one programme may be transferred from an institution to be accumulated in another programme offered by the same or another institution.

Credit transfer is the key to successful study mobility. Institutions, faculties, departments may make agreements which **guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits**.

Qualifications Frameworks:

- ✓ There are two European Qualifications Frameworks: the **Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)** and the **European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL)**.
- ✓ Both frameworks use learning outcomes to describe qualifications (e.g. Bachelor, Master, Doctor) and are compatible with each other as far as Higher Education is concerned: **QF-EHEA cycles 1, 2 and 3 correspond to EQF-LLL levels 6, 7 and 8.**
- ✓ In the QF-EHEA, three main cycles, as well as a short cycle, are identified:
 - **Short cycle** qualifications: approximately **120 ECTS credits**.
 - **1st cycle** qualifications (**Bachelor**): **180 to 240 ECTS credits**.
 - **2nd cycle** qualifications (**Master**): **90 to 120 ECTS credits** (with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits at the level of the second cycle).
 - **3rd cycle** qualifications (**PhD**): **it varies (at least 180 ECTS credits)**.

ECTS for mobility and credit recognition:

*Successful learning mobility requires academic recognition and transfer of credits. Recognition of credits is the process through which an institution certifies that learning outcomes achieved and assessed in **another** institution satisfy the requirements of one of the programmes they offer.*

*Given the diversity of programmes and HEIs, it is unlikely that the credits and learning outcomes of a single educational component in two different programmes will be identical. An open and flexible approach to the recognition of credits obtained in another context, including learning mobility, is therefore recommended, **based on compatibility of learning outcomes rather than equivalence of course contents.***

*In practice, recognition means that the number of credits gained for compatible learning outcomes achieved in **another** context will **replace** the number of credits that are allocated for compatible learning outcomes **at the awarding institution.***

Credit mobility:

- ✓ ECTS was designed to **facilitate learning mobility** between institutions for short-term study periods ('credit mobility').
- ✓ In ECTS, the following supporting **documents** help facilitate credit recognition for the purpose of mobility:
 - **Course Catalogue**
 - **Learning Agreement**
 - **Transcript of Records**
 - **Traineeship Certificate**

These documents provide information on the learning outcomes achieved, on which the qualification-awarding institution can make decisions on credit recognition and transfer.

Course Catalogue:

- ✓ The Course Catalogue includes detailed, user-friendly and up-to-date information on the institution.
- ✓ The Course Catalogue should include general information on the institution, its resources and services, as well as academic information on its programmes and individual educational components.
- ✓ The Course Catalogue should be published on the institution's website, in the national language and in English.



IPB ECTS Guide: www.ipb.pt/ectsguide
Information package and course catalogue

Learning Agreement for studies:

- ✓ Formalised **before the credit mobility period**, the Learning Agreement provides an official, binding commitment between the **student**, the **sending institution**, and the **receiving institution/ organisation/company** on all the learning activities to be carried out.
- ✓ The Learning Agreement includes:
 - The study programme abroad (**list of educational components to be taken**);
 - The educational components from which the student will be exempted at the sending institution if the components taken abroad are successfully completed.

Learning Agreement for traineeships:

- ✓ The Learning Agreement is also essential for **traineeships**.
- ✓ The commitment of the **receiving organisation** is to provide quality work placement, relevant to the student's learning path, with clearly defined learning outcomes, and to issue a Traineeship Certificate upon completion of the work placement.
- ✓ The commitment of the **sending institution** is to ensure the quality and relevance of the work placement, monitor the student's progress, and to grant recognition of the ECTS credits for the successfully completed learning outcomes.
- ✓ The Learning Agreement for traineeships should also be signed by the three parties: the student, the sending institution and the receiving organisation/company.

Transcript of Records:

- ✓ **After the credit mobility period**, the **receiving institution** provides a **Transcript of Records** to all mobile students and sends it to the **sending institution** and the **student** at the end of their period of study, in order to certify formally the work completed, the credits awarded, and the local grades received during the mobility period.

Traineeship Certificate:

- ✓ The **Traineeship Certificate** aims to provide transparency and bring out the value of the experience of the student's work placement. This document is issued by the **receiving organisation/enterprise** upon the trainee's completion of the traineeship, and it can be complemented by other documents, such as letters of recommendation.

The golden rule of recognition of credit mobility within the framework of inter-institutional agreements

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

[Learning Agreement form for studies](#)

[Learning Agreement form for traineeships](#)

The institutional commitment:

- ✓ Specific institutional rules should be developed to deal with the recognition of other learning experiences, to allow for credit accumulation and transfer through various types of mobility.

The inter-institutional agreement between institutions from Programme and Partner Countries:

- ✓ *Both institutions agree to cooperate for the exchange of **students and/or staff** in the context of the Erasmus+ programme. They commit to respect the quality requirements of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education in all aspects of the organisation and management of the mobility, in particular the recognition of the credits (or equivalent) awarded to students by the partner institution.*

Inter-institutional agreement form

Upon graduation:

- ✓ The **Diploma Supplement** is designed to provide graduates with a transparent record of their achievements.
- ✓ The educational components successfully completed abroad will be included in the Transcript of Records attached to the Diploma Supplement.



IPB Diploma Supplement: www.ipb.pt/sd



In 2011, the European Commission has awarded the **ECTS Label** to the IPB, acknowledging the quality of the information provided in terms of the degree programmes offered and the management of student mobility within the European Higher Education Area.



In 2013, IPB has been awarded also the **DS Label**. The purpose of the Diploma Supplement (DS) is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international transparency and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications.

Recognition procedures & DD programmes

See workshop

“Recognition procedures and double diploma within the IPB Erasmus+ ICM project”



IPB Erasmus+ ICM project: www.ipb.pt/icm
International Credit Mobility with Partner Countries

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- ✓ IPB and its Partners agreed on a **guide for monitoring and evaluating the ICM project outcomes**, using **performance metrics, and evaluation and satisfaction surveys to IPB and HEIs' students and staff**, namely on:
 - General performance metrics (number of countries and HEIs involved, number of student and staff flows, number of DD awarded);
 - Quality and transparency of the student and staff selection procedures (fulfilment of prerequisites, gender parity, disadvantaged and special needs participants);
 - Support given before and during mobility (assistance, language support, integration in the academic and civil community);

Monitoring and Evaluation:

...

- Academic success of the student mobility period;
- Quality and transparency of the recognition procedures for international mobility and for double diploma awarding;
- Quality and relevance of staff mobility: ICM training (IP) and teaching activities;
- Quality and impact of co-supervision (ICM and further research cooperation outputs raised from the contact between co-supervisors).

www.ipb.pt/icm

The IPB ICM webpage

The 2016 IPB ICM Annual report

Main references:

- ✓ The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en
<http://www.ehea.info>
- ✓ The ECTS:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en
- ✓ ECTS Users' Guide 2015:
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/>
- ✓ IPB Erasmus+ ICM website:
www.ipb.pt/icm



The Portuguese and the European HE systems The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

ipb.pt/icm

