

TERMINOLOGY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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 knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. 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

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. Course units can have various numbers of credits, however see "module".

COURSEWORK

Coursework defines required tasks within a course unit or module.

CREDIT

A quantified means of expressing the volume of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workloads measured in 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.

CYCLE DESCRIPTOR

Generic statements of the expected outcomes of a period of study that equals one of the three cycles as identified in the Bologna Process. Such a descriptor provides clear points of references that describe the outcome of a degree programme.

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)

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 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.

ECTS is a system for increasing the transparency of educational systems and facilitating the mobility of students across Europe through credit accumulation and transfer. 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.

LEVELS

Represent a series of sequential steps (a development continuum) expressed in terms of range of generic outcomes, against which typical qualifications can be positioned.

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

In Tuning, the term module refers to a course unit within a modularized system, that is a system based on course units carrying a uniform number of credits (usually 5 or 6) or a multiple of that number.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

The single description at national level, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relation between qualifications.

OPTIONAL COURSE

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

PROFILE

A specific subject related field of learning leading to a qualification.

QUALIFICATION

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognised programme of study.

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.

REFERENCE POINTS

Non-prescriptive indicators formulated as learning outcomes expressed in terms of competences that support the articulation of qualifications (degree programmes).

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'.

STUDENT WORKLOAD

A quantitative measure of learning activities that may feasibly be required for the achievement of the learning outcomes in the given timeframe (e.g. lectures, seminars, practical work, information retrieval, private study, independent research, examinations).

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

See student workload

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