



Meeting of the ECTS Medicine Association Budapest May, 21th

*The ECTS Grading Scale: Advantages and
problems - How to manage it for partners.*





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ECTS system



- **ECTS** helps to design, describe, and deliver programmes and award higher education qualifications
- Most Bologna countries have adopted ECTS by law
- Among other objectives, the Bologna Process aims at the *establishment of a system of credits as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility*
- ECTS helps to implement the quality assurance. In some countries ECTS is a requirement for accreditation of higher education programmes or qualifications
- ECTS is also increasingly used by institutions in other continents and thus plays a role in the growing global dimension of the Bologna Process.





ECTS credits


- ECTS credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes
- Learning outcomes describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning.
- 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full- time year of formal learning (academic year). In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, whereby one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work.

What can expect the student ?

As an Erasmus student, you are entitled to expect:

- Your home and host universities to have an inter-institutional agreement and to sign with you and before you leave a Learning/Training Agreement, including the credits to be achieved.
- Not to have to pay fees to your host university for tuition, registration, examinations, access to laboratory and library facilities during your Erasmus studies.
- Full academic recognition from your home university for satisfactorily completed activities during the Erasmus mobility period, in accordance with the Learning/Training Agreement.
- To be given a transcript of records at the end of your activities abroad, covering the studies/work carried out and signed by your host institution/enterprise. This will record your results with the credits and grades achieved, recorded in the Diploma Supplement.
- to be treated and served by your host university in the same way as their home students.
- Your student grant or loan from your home country to be maintained while you are abroad.





What is expected from the student ?

As an Erasmus student, you are expected to:


- Respect the rules and obligations of your Erasmus grant agreement with your home university or your National Agency.
- Ensure that any changes to the Learning/Training Agreement are agreed in writing with both the home and host institutions immediately they occur.
- Spend the full study/placement period as agreed at the host university/enterprise, including undergoing the relevant examinations or other forms of assessment, and respect its rules and regulations. Write a report on your Erasmus study/placement period abroad when you return and provide feedback if requested by your home university, the European Commission or the National Agency.
- **If you have a problem:**
 - Identify the problem clearly and check your rights and obligations.
 - Contact your departmental coordinator for Erasmus and use the formal appeals procedure of your home university if necessary. If you remain dissatisfied, contact your National Agency.



How to grade the student at the end of his learning ?



- It is well known that European educational systems have developed different approaches to grading which are deeply rooted in their pedagogical and cultural traditions
- It is to be pointed out, moreover, that not only do they have different grading scales, but they also use them differently in the various institutions and subject areas
- While it is essential to respect these differences, it is also important to make them transparent within the European Higher Education Area, so that grades attributed in all countries, institutions or subject areas can be properly understood and when necessary compared by people with different cultural backgrounds
- Transparency of performance levels is equally important for graduates applying for a job in their own or in another country






ECTS guidelines and grading scale


- To tackle this problem, in the past years ECTS guidelines suggested that, in addition to their national scale, European institutions might use a European grading scale as a translation device into other grading systems
- Such European scale was based on the statistical distribution of passing grades in each programme, which showed how the national scale was actually being used in that context and allowed for comparison with the statistical distribution of grades in a parallel programme of another institution
- As a first step, the implementation of the ECTS scale required the collection of statistical data in the institutions who were willing to participate in the scheme to make their grades more transparent.

Method to compare students' results between institutions



- In educational systems where ranking of students in each course unit/module was a standard procedure, statistical data could be provided for the very cohort in which the grade had been obtained
- In the other cases, the statistical distribution was based on the grades given over the previous two or three years to a specific reference group - a single programme or a group of homogeneous programmes – from which a consistent grading pattern could be derived
- These data, collected in a large number of institutions in Europe, have shown how national grading scales are actually being used
- For example, teachers in French institutions are more consistently using the lower half of their scale, while their Italian counterparts are making more use of grades in the upper half of it






Division into segments


- As a second step in the implementation of the ECTS grading scale, the statistical distribution curve for each reference group was split into five segments (Top 10%, next 25%, next 30%, next 25%, lowest 10%) also called **A, B, C, D, E**, which could become a device for the direct translation of grades from a degree programme in a given country/institution into a similar one in another country/institution
- For example, if, based on the statistical data, in a French degree programme the grade 14 was obtained by the top 10% of the students, the ECTS grade A could be added into a student's transcript alongside the grade 14. In this way the French grade 14 was understood as being one of the best grades obtained in that programme, comparable to the grade having a similar percentage in the same subject area in another country/institution, to which an A had also been attached – for example a 30 in an Italian institution.

Simplified system



- In order to simplify the procedure, while continuing to pursue the objective of making European grades more transparent, we propose using an “ECTS grading table”, concentrating on the first step of the 5-point system. Thus institutions only need to provide in a standard table form the statistical distribution of their own grades. Therefore, the ECTS grading scale based on a predetermined percentage structure is to be replaced by a simple statistical table completed for each degree programme or group of homogeneous programmes.
- In other words, instead of trying to fit existing grading practices in a standard distribution scale, universities need only to determine the actual percentage of students that receive each ‘local’ grade.





Erasmus incoming (percentiles)


			A					B					C					D					E				
anacad	annee	code	cours	nb	0	5	A	15	20	25	30	B	40	45	50	55	60	C	70	75	80	85	D	95	E		
2009	MEDE3	MORF-G-304	ANATOMIE TH	102	19	19	18	17	17	17	16	16	16	15	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	8		
2009	MEDE3	MORF-G-304	ANATOMIE TP	105	19	18	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	12	11	11	10	9	9	8		
2009	MEDE3	MORF-G-306	ANATPATH	139	19	18	18	17	16	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	12	10	8		
2009	MEDE3	BMOL-G-312	BIOCHIM PATH	112	19	17	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	12	11	11	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	9	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-309	GENETIQUE	169	20	18	17	17	17	16	15	15	15	15	14	14	13	13	13	13	12	12	11	10	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-311	IMMUNO MED	147	19	18	17	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	12	10	10	8		
2009	MEDE3	BMOL-G-308	MICROBIO BACT	133	20	19	19	19	18	17	17	17	17	17	16	16	16	15	14	14	13	12	12	12	10		
2009	MEDE3	BMOL-G-309	MICROBIO MYCO-PARA	152	20	18	18	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	12	12		
2009	MEDE3	BMOL-G-310	MICROBIO VIRO	125	19	16	15	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	12	12	11	11	10	10	9	8		
2009	MEDE3	MORF-G-305	NEURO-ANAT TH	117	20	19	18	18	17	16	16	15	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	12	11	11	10	10	9		
2009	MEDE3	MORF-G-305	NEURO-ANAT TP	124	20	18	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	11	10	10	9	8	8		
2009	MEDE3	PHAR-G-303	PHARMACO GEN	132	18	17	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	13	12	12	12	11	10	9	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-307	PHYSIO HUM TH	89	20	19	18	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	11	10	10	9	8	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-307	PHYSIO HUM TP	101	20	20	18	18	16	16	16	15	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	12	11	10	10	9	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-308	PHYSIO NERV TH	130	19	18	17	17	16	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	9	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-308	PHYSIO NERV TP	124	20	20	19	18	18	17	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	11	10	10	8		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-306	REPROD. HUM	155	18	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	12	12	10	10		
2009	MEDE3	MEDI-G-310	SEMIOLOGIE	121	20	17	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12	12	12	11	10	10	9	8		

Guidelines to compare

To use the ECTS grading table the following steps should be taken:

- 1. Identify the reference group for which the grade distribution will be calculated (usually a degree programme, but in some cases a wider or different grouping of students such as a Faculty or sector -- e.g. Humanities).
- 2. Collect all grades awarded over a period of (at least) two academic years for the reference group identified.
- 3. Calculate the grade distribution in terms of percentages for the reference group.
- 4. Include the grading percentage table of your degree programme in every Transcript of Records/ Diploma Supplement.
- 5. For transfer, compare the percentage table of the other institution's degree programme with your own. On the basis of this comparison individual grades can be converted.





Conclusions

- It is possible, even if the national system are different, to compare students in their group and in the group of the home institution
- transfer all credits gained abroad in the approved programme of study (Transcript of Records) into the student's official learning programme at home, indicating the learning activities they refer to, with their original titles; the credits will subsequently be included in the Diploma Supplement, with a note specifying the institution where they have been gained
- Problems that must be solved:
 - Transcripts of records must be sended before the end of June if possible
 - The method used to compare transcript should be the same for the partners
 - Transcripts and learning agreement must be translated in the diploma documents

