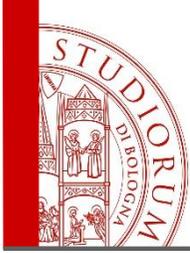# Recognising Differences

*Congruence issues between
Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records*

Sara SCURANI
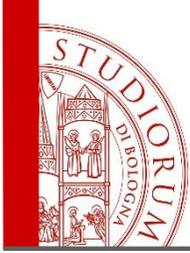
ECTS MA Annual Meeting – Bologna, 20 May 2016

Topics

- Erasmus+ Learning Agreement for Studies
- LA/TR incongruence and recognition issues
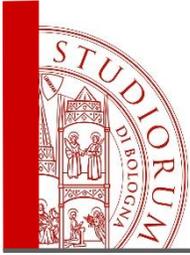- Participant experiences
- Proposed solutions

Learning Agreement

Erasmus+ Learning Agreement for Studies

- The **importance** of the recognition process is stressed even further;

- Recognition must be approved of **before** the beginning of the exchange.
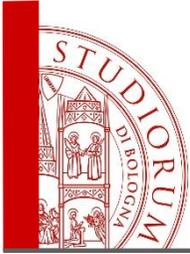
Learning Agreement

"A "Learning Agreement" sets out the programme of studies/traineeship to be followed and is **approved** by the student, the sending and the receiving institution/enterprise.

The Learning Agreement puts its emphasis on the thorough preparation of the mobility by **including all the educational components/learning outcomes for the future recognition** as well as the required language competence of the student.

All three parties signing the agreement **commit** themselves complying with all the arrangements agreed, thereby **insuring that the student should receive the recognition for the studies/traineeship abroad.**"

(from http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/higher-education/quality-framework_en.htm)

Learning Agreement

"The sending and receiving organisations, together with the students/staff, **must have agreed** on the activities to be undertaken by the students - in a **'Learning Agreement'** […] - **prior to the start of the mobility period.** These agreements define the target learning outcomes for the learning period abroad, **specify the formal recognition provisions** and list the rights and obligations of each party."

(Erasmus+ Programme Guide, p. 37)

Learning Agreement

Study Programme at the Receiving Institution

Planned period of the mobility: from [month/year] ……………. to [month/year] ……………

Table A Before the mobility	Component code (if any)	Component title at the Receiving Institution (as indicated in the course catalogue[7])	Semester [e.g. autumn/spring; term]	Number of ECTS credits (or equivalent)[8] to be awarded by the Receiving Institution upon successful completion
				Total: …

Web link to the course catalogue at the Receiving Institution describing the learning outcomes: [*web link to the relevant information*]

The level of language competence[9] in _____ [*indicate here the main language of instruction*] that the student already has or agrees to acquire by the start of the study period is: A1 ☐   A2 ☐   B1 ☐   B2 ☐   C1 ☐   C2 ☐   *Native speaker* ☐

Recognition at the Sending Institution

Table B Before the mobility	Component code (if any)	Component title at the Sending Institution (as indicated in the course catalogue)	Semester [e.g. autumn/spring; term]	Number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) to be recognised by the Sending Institution
				Total: …

Provisions applying if the student does not complete successfully some educational components: [*web link to the relevant information*]

Learning Agreement

Transcript of Records at the Receiving Institution

Start and end dates of the study period: from [day/month/year] ……………. to [day/month/year] …………….

Table C After the mobility	Component code (if any)	Component title at the Receiving Institution (as indicated in the course catalogue)	Was the component successfully completed by the student? [Yes/No]	Number of ECTS credits (or equivalent)	Grades received at the Receiving Institution
				Total: …	

Transcript of Records and Recognition at the Sending Institution

Start and end dates of the study period: from [day/month/year] ……………. to [day/month/year] …………….

Table D After the mobility	Component code (if any)	Title of recognised component at the Sending Institution (as indicated in the course catalogue)	Number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) recognised	Grades registered at the Sending Institution (if applicable)
			Total: …	

Learning Agreement

Commitment

"By signing this document, the student, the Sending Institution and the Receiving Institution confirm that they approve the Learning Agreement and that they will comply with all the arrangements agreed by all parties […].

The **Receiving Institution confirms** that the educational components listed in **Table A** are in line with its course catalogue and should be available to the student.

The **Sending Institution commits to recognise** all the credits or equivalent units gained at the Receiving Institution for the successfully completed educational components and to count them towards the student's degree as described in **Table B**.

Any exceptions to this rule are documented in an annex of this Learning Agreement and agreed by all parties. […]."

(E+ L.A. for Studies)

Learning Agreement

"The Receiving Institution confirms that **the educational components listed in Table A** **are in line with its course catalogue** and **should be available to the student.**"
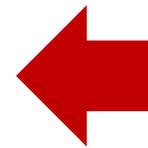
⬅ … starts from here!

Table A = Table C (TR)

"The Sending Institution commits to **recognise all the credits or equivalent units gained at the Receiving Institution** for the successfully completed educational components **and to count them towards the student's degree** as described in Table B."
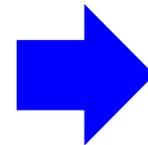
➡ = Successful recognition…

(Table B → Table D)
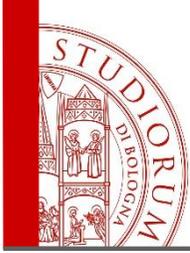
LA/TR incongruence

Changes in LA / duration of exchange / etc. can be (more or less) easily managed.

However, in some cases, **some changes between LA and TR do not depend (only) on the student!**

Sometimes, L.A. (Table A) and Transcript of Records (Table C) do not match.

Let's see three possible scenarios:
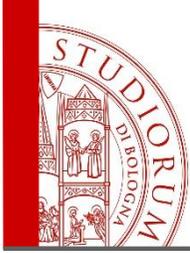
LA/TR incongruence

Differences in ECTS credits

- Less ECTS credits than those on the course catalogue/LA are certified on the TR, or
- No ECTS credits are certified on the TR (but pass/passing grade is certified nonetheless)

Why does it matter?

Student workload is insufficient for full recognition → student must re-sit an exam (or part of it)

= Recognition fail!
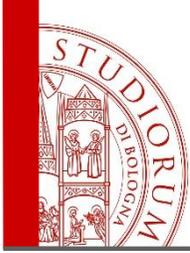
LA/TR incongruence

Differences in course names

e.g.

- Dermatology and Infectious diseases (5 ECTS credits) on the LA
- Dermatology (5 ECTS credits) on the TR

Why does it matter?

Sometimes, differences in course names correspond to differences in course contents – the topics actually covered are not the same ones agreed upon in the L.A. → student must re-sit an exam (or part of it)

= Recognition fail!
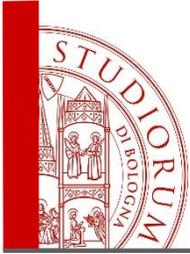
LA/TR incongruence

Differences in course contents

e.g.

- Paediatrics (5 ECTS credits) in the LA → course contents feature ALSO paediatric surgical topics;

- Paediatrics (5 ECTS credits) in the TR → BUT course contents feature NO paediatric surgical topics.

Why does it matter?

The topics actually covered are not the same ones agreed upon in the L.A. → student must re-sit an exam (or part of it)
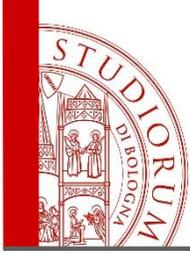
= Recognition fail!

Participant experiences

So...

- Differences in **ECTS credits**

- Differences in **course names**

- Differences in **course contents**

→ Has it ever happened to you?

→ How have you solved the issue?

→ Has it affected the recognition process in any way (e.g. no recognition, partial recognition, delays in the process, ...)?
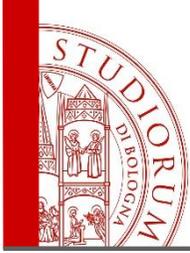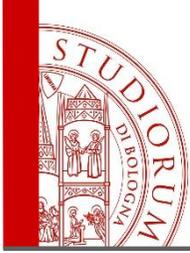
Proposed solutions

Proposed solutions

As Receiving Institutions, we could inform incoming students (and their Sending Institutions) about how the final Transcript of Records will look like by:

- Providing a sample TR;

- Highlighting possible differences between LA/TR due to the students' academic performance;

- If available, make use of IT applications to prevent 'technical' LA/TR incongruences*
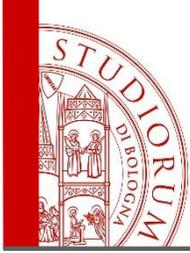
Proposed solutions

* A note on IT applications

+	-
• Increased integration with institutional course catalogue	• Less flexibility when dealing with exchanges
• Less mistakes due to manual data handling (e.g. multiple copy/paste)	• High degree of variation in availability and efficacy throughout HEIs
• Easier to manage mobility workflow	

Proposed solutions

Proposed solutions

Your ideas and recommendations:

- Students can be provided with additional documents to be signed during the mobility at the Receiving Institution for confirmation of course contents and duration;

- Information on course catalogues should be complete and accurate;

- Exchange contents should be pre-planned by the sending institution;

Proposed solutions

Proposed solutions

Your ideas and recommendations:

- More transparency in online documents;

- Clarify on TR whether exams are written or oral;

- Clarify on TR if credits are awarded upon passing the final exam or for attendance only;

- Ask for an additional report by the Receiving Institution with any information that is missing from the TR but is needed by the Sending Institution for recognition.
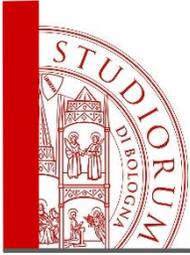
Thank you very much for your attention!
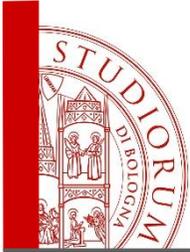
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