



ECTS as used by AQUATNET partners (93% of AQUA-TNET survey respondents use ECTS)

Introduction

The questionnaire overall had 31 respondents from different countries representing a range of educational institutes. The countries which responded were Belgium, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Ireland, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Turkey. The relevant questions concerning the use of ECTS are shown here.

Section A: questionnaire results

Section B: Short description of evolution of ECTS in Europe

Questionnaire sample size

Possible participants: 83

Respondents: 31

Section A: questionnaire results

Course content and organisation

- **65%** of the AQUA-TNET partner programmes covered in the survey offer **specific aquaculture courses**, covered in
 - **62%** offer a **3 year** programme
 - 38% of the cases in an 8 semester (4 year) programme.
 - **70%** of the programmes have **undergone revisions** in order to adapt to the **Bologna Reforms** (in general the application of **ECTS & curriculum** changes)
 - **75%** of them are **aware of TUNING** project
 - 72% have considered these 'guidelines' in their programme reforms
 - **70% use Learning Outcomes.**
- **28%** offer aquaculture/marine science/aquatic resources course modules as a **specific programme**
- **48%** of the programmes are organized in a **year structure**
- **33%** offer all their courses in a **modular structure**
- **19%** offer a combination of both.
- In order to obtain a BSc title, **in average 44 modules** need to be taken, with as extremes **minimum 10 and maximum 88** courses. In average, 45 modules are compulsory.
- Expressed in **ECTS** (in 93% of the programmes, ECTS are used as course descriptors), this comes down to an **average of 130 ECTS** credits to obtain a BSc
- **In 77% of the cases, an academic year has an ECTS-load of 60.**
- In **93%** of the cases, an **Erasmus exchange is possible** in the course's framework. All programmes consist of a minimum of 3 components, 2 of them being lectures and lab work in all cases. The other options being:



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- field work 96 %
- oral presentation 92 %
- dissertation/thesis 81 %
- literature review 77 %
- tutorials 65 %

Course assessment

- Number of assessment options:
 - 6 33 %
 - 5 or 7 22 %
 - 4 15 %
 - 3 5 %
 - 2 3 %
- Assessment types
 - laboratory work 19 %
 - formal written examination 17 %
 - thesis/dissertation 15 %
 - field work 14 %
 - continuous assessment 12 %
 - progress tests 8 %
 - work placement 6 %
 - formal written examination only 3 %



Section B

What is ECTS?

ECTS, the European Credit Transfer System, was originally developed by the Commission of the European Communities (a small pilot study in 1984) in order to provide common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies abroad. It was used initially to provide a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements, and transferring them from one institution to another. It is now based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives which should be specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competences that are required. From 2005, it also became a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer, based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. Credit accumulation and transfer are carried out by means of the ECTS key documents (Course Catalogue, Student Application form, Learning Agreement and Transcription of records). It aims to facilitate the planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility. Further information can be obtained from the ECTS website http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.html

The ECTS system is based on the principle of mutual trust and confidence between the participating higher education institutions. The few rules of ECTS, concerning information (on courses available), agreement (between the home and host institutions) and the use of credit points (to indicate student workload) are set out to reinforce this mutual trust and confidence. Each ECTS department will describe the courses it offers not only in terms of content but also adding credits to each course.

The ECTS credits

ECTS credits are value allocated to course units to describe the student workload required to complete them. They reflect the quantity of work (student workload) each course requires in relation to the total quantity of work required to complete a full year academic study at the institution, that is, lectures, practical work, seminars, private work - in the library or at home – and examinations or other assessment activities. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours per year, and one credit usually corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work.

In ECTS, 60 credits represent the workload of a year of study; normally 30 credits are given for a semester and 20 credits for a term. 60 ECTS credits are given to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning and its associated outcomes (lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study, preparation, examinations).

It is important that no special courses are set up for ECTS purposes, but that all ECTS courses are mainstream courses of the participating institutions, as followed by



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home students under normal regulations.

It is up to the participating institutions to subdivide the credits for the different courses. Practical placements and optional courses which form an integral part of the course of study receive academic credit. Practical placement and optional courses which do not form an integral part of the course of study do not receive academic credit. Non-credit courses may be mentioned in the transcript of records. Credits are awarded only when the course has been completed and all required examinations have been successfully taken.

ECTS students

The students participating in ECTS will normally receive full credit for all academic work successfully carried out at any of the ECTS partner institutions and they will be able to transfer those academic credits from one participating institution to another on the basis of a prior agreement on the content of study programmes abroad between students and the institutions involved. When the student has successfully completed the study programme previously agreed on between the home and the host institution and returns to the home institution, credit transfer will take place, and the student will continue the study course at the home institution without any loss of time or credit. If, on the other hand, the student decides to stay at the host institution and to take a degree there, he or she may have to adapt his or her study course due to the legal, institutional and departmental rules in the host country, institution and department.

How are ECTS credits used?

Credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components such as modules, course units, dissertation work, work placement, laboratory and field work. Credits may be accumulated with a view to obtaining qualification, as decided by the degree-awarding institution. The performance of the student is documented by a local/national grade which can be ranked on the ECTS grading scale as follows:

A best 10%

B next 25%

C next 30%

D next 25%

E next 10%

Thereafter, a distinction is made between the grades FX and F (used of students that have failed). FX means 'fail- more work needed in order to pass'. F means 'considerable further work is required to pass'. The inclusion of failure rates in the Transcript of Records is optional. Credits awarded in one programme may be transferred to another programme, offered by the same or another institution. This



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transfer can only take place if the degree-awarding institution recognizes the credits and the associated learning outcomes.

Credit transfer and accumulation are helped by the use of the ECTS key documents (course catalogue, learning agreement, and transcript of records) as well as the Diploma Supplement.

It should be noted that it is very difficult to access information concerning ECTS at the moment as the previous useful website has been transferred to the EACE website which does not provide most of the above details. It is not possible to find, let alone download, the essential documents (Course Catalogue, Student Application form, Learning Agreement and Transcription of records) as of January 2009.

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