



European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) Key Features

↘ What is ECTS?

The **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)** is a tool which enables students to collect credits for learning achieved through higher education. ECTS is a learner-centred system which aims to increase transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes.

It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility. ECTS is widely used in formal higher education and can be applied to other lifelong learning activities.

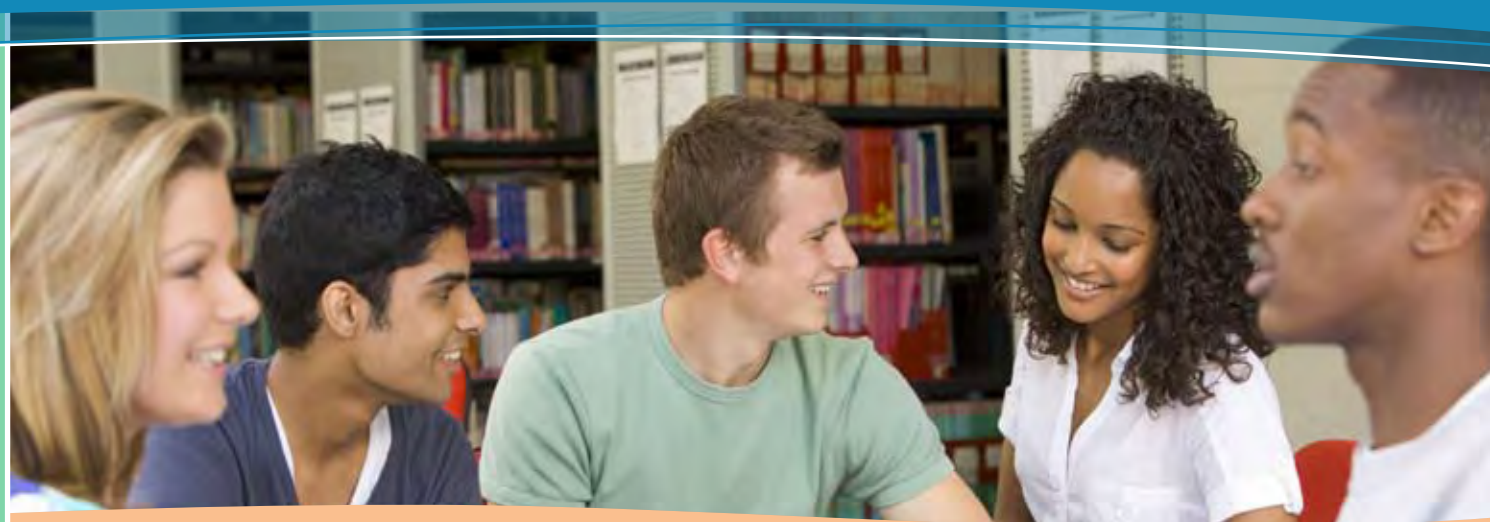


↘ What are ECTS credits?

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. They relate to level descriptors in national and European qualifications frameworks.

Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. 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.



↘ How can ECTS credits be 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 placements and laboratory work). The number of credits ascribed to each component is based on its weight in terms of the workload students need in order to achieve the learning outcomes in a formal context.

Credits are awarded to individual students (full-time or part-time) after completion of the learning activities required by a formal programme of study or by a single educational component and the successful assessment of the achieved learning outcomes. ***Credits may be accumulated with a view to obtaining qualifications, as decided by the degree-awarding institution.***

If students have achieved learning outcomes in other learning contexts or timeframes (formal, non-formal or informal), the associated credits may be awarded after successful assessment, validation or recognition of these learning outcomes.

Credits awarded in one programme may be transferred into another programme, offered by the same or another institution. This transfer can only take place if the degree-awarding institution recognises the credits and the associated learning outcomes. Partner institutions should agree in advance on the recognition of periods of study abroad.

Credit transfer and accumulation are facilitated by the use of the ***ECTS key documents*** (Course Catalogue, Student Application Form, Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records) as well as the Diploma Supplement.

What is the ECTS Label?

An ECTS label will be awarded to institutions which apply ECTS correctly **in all first and second cycle degree programmes**. The label will raise the profile of the institution as a transparent and reliable partner in European and international cooperation.

The **criteria** for the label are: an information package / course catalogue (online) in English, the correct use of ECTS credits, samples of learning agreements, transcripts of records and proof of academic recognition.

The European Commission will organise yearly application rounds for the ECTS label. Applications for the ECTS label can be submitted by a Higher Education Institution that has been awarded a 'Standard' or an 'Extended' Erasmus University Charter.

↘ What can ECTS do for you?

In 2002 Lars successfully completed the first year of a Master in Sciences in Sweden, but couldn't go on to finish the course because he moved to Belgium in order to take up a job offer.



After several years of thinking *it's a shame I never finished that Masters course*, Lars wrote to the accreditation department of the university where he had studied in Sweden, to see if he could obtain recognition for the part qualification.

The accreditation office of the university were able to confirm that he had successfully completed the first year of the programme and that he could receive 60 ECTS credits for the modules completed. After just a few weeks, an envelope arrived in the post with an official transcript confirming the ECTS credits.

Lars is now looking to use his 60 ECTS credits to complete the Master at a university in Belgium. Instead of starting a course right at the beginning, the 60 credits he has already received will be recognised and he can progress straight to the second year.

Where to find more information on ECTS:

More information on ECTS and the ECTS Users' Guide can be found on the Europa website of the European Commission:



The screenshot shows the European Commission website for Education & Training. The main heading is "European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)". Below the heading, there is a brief description of ECTS: "ECTS makes teaching and learning more transparent and facilitates the recognition of studies (formal, non-formal and informal). The system is used across Europe for credit transfer (student mobility) and credit accumulation (learning paths towards a degree). It also informs curriculum design and quality assurance." There are several sections of text and links, including "Lifelong Learning Policy", "Credit transfer (ECTS)", "Credit accumulation (ECTS)", and "Dissemination". A sidebar on the right contains a "Go depth" button and a link to the "European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement (DS) 2009-2011".

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm