

ECVET Consultation – Response from Aston University, Birmingham, B4 7ET, United Kingdom

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Response to questions in consultation document:

4.2.1 The purpose of and reasons for an ECVET system

The principle of transferable credits is supported but it is essential that the proposed voluntary status of ECVET is maintained. As the document acknowledges, there is huge diversity in the nature of vocational education and training even within member states. In particular, individual educational institutions must remain free to accept or not to accept credits from other institutions.

The role of “competent authorities” is likely to be problematic. There will need to be a process to determine what organisations have the competencies to be awarded this status.

4.2.2 The technical basis for ECVET

It is recommended that ECVET is confined to formal learning outcomes. Attempting to assign credit to informal learning outcomes is likely to undermine the credibility of ECVET.

A reference figure of 120 credit points aligns with current views of what constitutes an annual full time study load.

4.2.3 Implementing ECVET

ECVET will work best if implemented between consenting institutions or between consortia of institutions. The criteria for allocating credit points should be mutually agreed by these institutions. There should be no attempt to develop standardised criteria as this would undermine quality standards which are rightly set at the institutional level, albeit within the guidance of national and international quality frameworks.

In the UK qualifications system, it is the autonomy of individual institutions to decide content and standards of taught programmes that allows the flexibility to encourage import of credits through ECVET. A major constraint on implementation would be if there was any attempt to impose acceptance of ECVET credits as a compulsory requirement. A 5-year timeframe for wide scale implementation would seem advisable.

4.2.4 Measures for supporting the implementation and development of ECVET

As far as possible, ECVET should build on existing practices and systems. For example, in the UK there is much experience in accrediting prior learning, especially in the Further Education (FE) sector.

4.2.5 ECVET's potential for enhancing mobility

If simple, reliable processes for determining credits can be devised then this should lead to greater mobility for learners and more partnerships between institutions. However, rather than ECVET, a higher priority would seem to be achieving a rationalisation of qualifications in individual member states – in the UK alone there are in excess of 2000 different qualifications on offer to student aged 16+.