

# European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training

## 1 The purpose of and reasons for ECVET system

The development of credit systems for vocational education and training is to be welcomed. However, while much of the document is uncontentious and is welcomed, it persists in pursuing two flawed approaches to credits.

The document ignores the experience of the development of ECTS and the efforts of Governments and the Commission to break down the artificial barriers between “vocational” and “academic” education, particularly in Higher Education. The European Qualification Framework and the National Qualification Frameworks in Member States, have sought to approach qualifications at the tertiary level in an integrated way, reinforcing the process of mutual recognition, transfer and progression between different levels and types of tertiary education. To adopt a different European system of credits for vocational education is to move in the opposite direction. This is compounded by the suggestion that vocational credits should be awarded on the basis of 120 for a standard academic year in comparison with ECTS which has used 60 credits. Since ECTS has been endorsed by the Bologna Process and is now the legal setting in many countries, the Commission should resolve that 60 should be the common currency so that there is a shared sense of what might be called the Education and Training Euro credit for all forms of learning.

If we are trying to develop credit systems for Lifelong Learning and encouraging transfer from different types of formal and informal education, it surely makes sense to have one credit unit which becomes universally understood, rather than to develop two, discrete and separate systems.

The second area of concern relates to the emphasis on credit transfer. While the arguments supporting this emphasis are powerful, they ignore the extent to which the European debate has moved from transfer to accumulation. Using credits for accumulation purposes, presents a number of challenges which institutions, member states and ECTS itself are currently addressing. Accumulation is completely compatible with transfer but does involve in depth consideration of levels within a qualification and attaching levels to credits.

## 2 Allocation of ECVET Credit points

In section 2.3.2 on the allocation of ECVET credit points, it is suggested that part of the basis is “an estimation of the importance of the contents of each unit defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence”. The use of the word “importance” in relation to content raises issues which are potentially contentious. An emphasis on learning outcomes, skills and competences, generic and subject is commonly agreed to be a key feature of a credit system. At the same time, workload cannot be ignored even though it must be recognised that this will be expressed in notional and/or average terms. If this is the case, then additional credits can only be awarded if both learning outcomes and the workload justify it. The document seems to support this view when it talks about allocating 120 credits for a standard academic year. “Importance” can be

addressed in a variety of ways. Units can be compulsory, they can be essential for progression; they can be given double weighting in the examination process. Unless the learning outcomes and workload associated with achieving these justify additional credits, it would be inappropriate to allocate credits on the deemed “importance” of the unit or module.

To sum up:-

- 1 There should be one European credit system based on 60, which is already the established credit currency throughout most of Europe.
- 2 The more complex issue of developing a framework and general understanding of credits within an accumulation system needs to be addressed, understanding that responsibility for such systems is national and institutional.

#### List of UK Bologna Promoters

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>University</b>
Stephen Adam	Head of Undergraduate Studies, Politics	University of Westminster
Professor Tim Birtwistle	Professor of Law	Leeds Metropolitan University
Professor Malcolm Cook	Professor of 18th Century French Studies	University of Exeter
Dr Alan Davidson	Dean, Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching & Assessment	The Robert Gordon University
Anne Davies	Senior Lecturer, Head of International Programmes – School of Management and Economics	Queens University Belfast
Dr Howard Davies	Head of European Development	London Metropolitan University
Professor Wendy Davies	Pro-Provost European Affairs	University College London
James Dunphy	Project Administrator	The Robert Gordon University
Professor Diane Meehan	Dean of Faculty of Technology and Environment	Liverpool John Moores University
Huw Morris	Academic Registrar	University of Wales, Swansea
John Reilly	UK Higher Education Expert	
Professor Graeme Roberts	Formerly Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning)	University of Aberdeen
Simon Sweeney	Head of Programme MA International Studies	York St John University
Dr Anthony Vickers	Head of Department – Electronic Systems Engineering	University of Essex

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