



Education and Training

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Restructuring of Rigid to Flexible Education System

Accreditation of study programs

Practice of ECTS Implementation

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Bologna declaration (1999)

is reform aimed at of higher education to create harmonized open European higher education area upon preservation of its diversity.

Measures:

- *to adopt easy understanding and comparable system, of academic degrees,*
- *to adopt two cycles study (undergraduate, graduate)*
- *to implement credit system,*
- *to improve condition for mobility,*
- *to improve collaboration in quality assessment,*
- *to improve the European dimension in HE.*

To support of Bologna process implementation at universities was established National B-promoters team.

New study programs

2002 – Higher education act No. 131/2002 determine liability to implement two cycle study and credit system at all higher education institutions from Sept.1,2005.

These requirements are precondition for study programs accreditation and financing from state budget.

Ministry of education govern study branch system in which can be offered study programs at HE institutions in Slovakia. Study branch – area of knowledge which can be object of higher education

Study program is compact and harmonized set of study units (lecture, seminar, lab,...) aimed at defined learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are described in terms of competences: what a learner knows or is able to demonstrate after the completion of a learning process. This concerns both subject specific competences and generic competences, like communication skills and leadership.

Competences are described as points of reference for curriculum design and evaluation, not as straightjackets.

They allow flexibility and autonomy in the construction of curricula. At the same time, they provide a common language for describing what curricula are targeted.

Accreditation of study programs

Accreditation Commission

Advisory board established by government.

Mission – monitoring and independently quality assessment of education, research, development and further creative activities of HE institutions.

On the base of complex reviewing Accreditation Commission elaborate valuation report relate to study program including recommendation for HE institution and ministry.

Ministry of education decree to university competency to offer the program and to award appropriate titles for limited term.

Implementation of credit system at SUA in Nitra

- At the beginning of the nineties the credit system was introduced at some faculties to enable flexibility of study
- Students mobility realized on the base of bilateral agreement 1993-97 (US universities)
- First Institutional contract with European Commission in academic year 1998-99
- introducing ECTS standards was important step to foster the mobility activity and also the tool to overcome inter-faculty and inter-institutional barriers of student mobility
- Full application of ECTS begun in 2001-2

ECTS implementation in Slovakia

2002 – Higher education act No. 131/2002

Ministerial regulation on credit system of study

No.614/2002 give regulation for implementation of credit system and determine of diploma supplement (DS) content.

Practice indicate necessity to update some its part mainly emphasize on learning outcomes defined on all cycles.

Reaction to ECTS implementation

Frequent question – Why we need the change?

Teaching staff - hesitating acceptance

- change bring them extra work
- in apprehension of transparency
- doubts in comparison with colleagues
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Students - acceptance commonly positive with continuous increase of support.

Key question - Why introduce ECTS?

- ECTS makes study programmes easy to read and compare for all students, local and foreign.
- ECTS facilitates mobility and academic recognition.
- ECTS helps university to organise and revise their study programmes.
- ECTS can be used across a variety of programmes and modes delivery.

Fundamental preconditions of ECTS implementation

- support of university and faculties top management and Rector's decision
- ECTS coordinators network formation
- involvement of teachers into process – information campaign on principles and realization of the credit system
- effective infrastructure operation for of ECTS – university information network
- conceptual compatibility of study programs development on inter-faculty level.
- to adopt common university Study Rules
- ECTS implementation at full university area
- teachers staff involvement into process – explain of principles and realization of credit system
- infrastructure development for effective ECTS operation – information university network

Experience and problems

Preparation of the first Information package discovered more problems and negatives:

- *precision of offered courses (subjects) dates,*
- *overlap of some subjects content*
- *interfaculty differences in concept of study programmes development,*

Main tasks

To maintain continuity of ECTS system we there identified three main groups of tasks.

The first group cover some formal tasks:

- correct categorization of subjects by ISCED and ECTS codes
- continues precision of subject characteristics especially learning outcomes
- regular actualization of subject characteristics.

Second group – the most important

Requirements:

- to form the subjects cover one semester
- to solve content overlaps of subjects
- credits allocation have to be based on student workload
- allocated credits to subject are valid for whole university regardless of faculty where the subject is taught
- strengthen the role of institutional and faculty coordinators
- to unify system of credits allocation of specific educational components, e.g. practice, thesis, state exam, seminars,
- to distinguish cycle for which is subject assigned

The third group - cover organisational items of the process:

- mechanisms of study program development in structure – obligatory, obligatory elective, elective
- accreditation of the subjects listed and continuously inserted into university database and related claim into teaching schedule and teachers workload etc.
- to ensure simple transition to ECTS grades.

Recommendations of external ECTS counselors to Information package

- Consistently respect structure of IP
- Exact credit allocation for semester 30 credits and 60 credits per academic year + subject structure: obligatory, obligatory elective, elective
- Clearly defined learning outcomes – new knowledge, competences, skills,... gained by student in given subject
- Ways of indication achievements expected learning outcomes
- More information for students about academic and non academic facilities offered by university,
- IP for the following academic year advertise in advance
- To distinguish study cycle for which is the subject designate

Mobility

Mobility is one of key element of Bologna process.
Some experience of mobility realization point out that:

- *Key dimension of mobility is language,*
- *Critical element of mobility is credits recognition,*
- *Exact definition of learning outcomes stimulate and facilitate collaboration – transparency, comparativeness,*
- *Increase of mobility number depends on more flexible approach to new generation study programs,*
- *Consistent implementation of tools e.g. ECTS, QFHE/EQF, DS etc. facilitate mobility,*
- *Rigorous observance of preparation rules and mobility realization is base of credit recognition.*