

Report for the Consultation Meeting on the Update of the ECTS Users' Guide held on 18 September 2008

Purpose of the Meeting: The last version of the ECTS Users' Guide was published in 2005 and the Bologna Promoters as well as CION have long felt the need for its update to include more recent developments. This meeting was intended to finalise the Guide.

Participant/s: Veronica Grech, Deputy Registrar, University of Malta and Bologna Expert

Report drawn up by: Veronica Grech

Time: Meeting commenced at 09.30hrs and ended at 18.00hrs.

Abbreviations used: A – Austria; B – Belgium; CZ – Czech Republic; CY – Cyprus; DK – Denmark; EE – Estonia; FIN – Finland; F – France; D – Germany; EL – Greece; IRL – Ireland; HU – Hungary; I – Italy; LV – Latvia; LT – Lithuania; L – Luxembourg; M – Malta; NL – Netherlands; PL – Poland; P – Portugal; E – Spain; SI – Slovenia; SK – Slovakia; S – Sweden; UK – United Kingdom; CION – Commission.

Introduction

The last version of the ECTS Users' Guide was published in 2005. Many developments in the EHEA have taken place since then and the Bologna Promoters as well as CION, the European University Association (EUA), the European Students' Union and EURASHE had decided that the Guide needed to be brought up-to-date and revised. Two meetings of all Bologna Promoters with responsibility for ECTS had been held previously where there was disagreement about certain issues. At the last meeting in March 2007 it had been agreed that a small group of experts, with the support of GHK Consulting, would work on a final draft. This meeting was held to agree on the final version of the Guide.

1 Update of ECTS Users' Guide (Appendix 1)

Mr Peter van der Hijden from CION opened the meeting by pointing out that much valuable work had done by the group of ten experts (including a student, EUA and EURASHE) who had been asked to re-draft the ECTS Users' Guide and the general feedback received so far was very positive.

Participants were in favour of the new format of the Guide, whereby the Key Features (already approved and published) are explained in detail one by one in the Guide. They agreed to consider each section separately so that all participants could have an opportunity to comment.

Participants made various remarks and suggestions, the most important of which are:

- The addition of a brief historical introduction about ECTS, possibly only on the web version of the Guide
- Introduction: Clarification of 'work-based' mode of delivery to include continuing professional development
- Section 3.2 ECTS and learning outcomes: it was agreed to leave both definitions of learning outcomes but to emphasise that institutions must make clear according to which definition they were basing their learning outcomes

- Section 4.1.3 ECTS credits and work placements: to clarify that if work placements are over and above the 60 ECTS credits for the full-time year, additional credits should be given for work placements for which students must be assessed
- Section 4.4.1 ECTS and periods of study abroad: to insert reference to joint programmes
- Section 4.5 ECTS and lifelong learning: to add a footnote regarding developments in ECVET
- Section 5 Quality assurance and ECTS: to reword the statement about learning agreements to make it clear that these are only required in the case of mobile students
- Section 6.1.1 Checklist for Information and Course Catalogue: to add 'mode of delivery' under the section on description of individual course units
- Section 6.2.2 Learning Agreement for work placements: to re-word para. 3 to make it clearer
- All reference to 'degree programmes' should be changed to 'programmes' so as to include all types and levels of programmes
- Section 7 Bibliography: to add a footnote regarding development of ECVET and to amplify the bibliography
- Section 8 Glossary: to revise the definition of 'contact hour' and to add a definition of 'cycle'
- Annex 1: to add a statement about the students' right for academic appeal
- Annex 3: this annex includes a new ECTS Grade Interpretation Scheme (EGIS) intended to replace the previous ECTS grading scale – no agreement was reached
- Annex 4: to include recent examples of the various key documents
- Annex 5: to remove the column headed 'academic year (survey by CRUS)'

Conclusion

Mr van der Hijden thanked participants for their valuable insights and useful contributions, thus making the Guide clearer and more helpful to institutions and staff who require guidance on the use of the ECTS credit and accumulation system.

Next Steps

Mr van der Hijden asked participants to forward to him and to the Bologna Secretariat any further comments by the end of October. It was intended to send the Guide for printing in November 2008. Eventually the Guide will be translated in various EU languages.

Personal remarks

I agree with the current version of the ECTS Users' Guide as amended at the meeting. This Guide can be a useful guidance tool both for institutions who have already adopted ECTS and for those in the various stages of implementation. It is thus essential that the Guide is made available both as a booklet and online as soon as possible.

Officials to be alerted immediately

Dr James Calleja, BFUG member, should be receiving the updated version of the ECTS Users' Guide before the next BFUG meeting. To keep in touch with me to ensure that all amendments agreed to during this meeting have been included in the final version of the Guide.

As the EGIS is a new proposal, it requires consideration by the institutions which have adopted, or are in the process of changing to, ECTS and should not be approved hastily. If and when approved, its use should remain voluntary to give time to institutions to see if they are in a position to adopt it and to incorporate it within their students' records software.

Issues to be followed up by Malta

EGIS to be discussed with the University of Malta.

Date of Next Meeting

At this stage, no further meetings about the ECTS Users' Guide are envisaged.

Veronica Grech

23 September 2008

Report ECTS Guide Sep08