

IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM (ECTS) AND THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Guidelines for Schools

(Revised October 2006)

1. Context for the ECTS in Trinity College (External)

Through Ireland's formal participation in the Bologna Process at government level, all higher education institutions and the various higher education agencies in the State are committed to implementing the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement in respect of all undergraduate (cycle 1) and taught postgraduate (cycle 2) programmes. These 'transparency tools' of the Process are designed for use in conjunction with each other (and with other instruments such as learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks) to facilitate vastly improved transparency and comparability of periods of study and qualifications across the emerging European Higher Education Area, and thereby removing many existing obstacles to increased mobility in and between education, training and the labour market. The ECTS and the Diploma Supplement were specified objectives of the 1999 Bologna Declaration, which aims to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Now that the mid-point of the Process is past, there is gathering pressure nationally on Trinity College and other institutions for full and speedy compliance with the required reforms.

2. ECTS implementation in TCD

The review of the use of the ECTS in undergraduate degree courses was instigated by the Senior Lecturer at the outset of the 2004/05 academic year with the aim of achieving full implementation of the ECTS in undergraduate degree programmes, effective from the 2005/06 academic year, and routine production of the Diploma Supplement for graduates of Bachelor degree programmes from 2009, and a phased roll-out of the Diploma Supplement for graduates/diplomates of taught postgraduate programmes commencing in 2007.

In June 2006, the University Council approved a recommendation from the Bologna Desk, which was put forward by the Senior Lecturer with the support of the Committee of Heads of School, concerning the 'credit size' of modules/course components with effect from the 2007/08 academic year¹.

- All modules, whether in undergraduate or taught postgraduate programmes, should be designed to carry a ECTS credit weighting of 5 ECTS at their smallest, or multiples of 5 ECTS.
- In order to facilitate the sharing of modules/course components between single honors, joint honors and multi-disciplinary programmes while maintaining parity of workload and maximizing choice for students on these different programmes, as a general rule a maximum of 10 ECTS credits should apply in the case of such shared components/modules;
- Core/mandatory elements restricted to students on particular degree programmes may carry a higher weighting of 15 or 20 ECTS credits.

¹ Schools may retain the existing course arrangements for Senior Sophister students in 2007/08 if they have reason to consider that the implementation of this recommendation would cause difficulties in relation to the degree examination or would otherwise disadvantage students who commenced the Sophister cycle in 2006/07. In such cases, the new arrangements should be introduced for students entering the Sophister cycle in 2007/08 (ie. the Junior Sophister year 2007/08, extending to the Senior Sophister year from 2008/09).

3. **Basic Principles**

Definition of the ECTS:

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study. These objectives should preferably be specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be acquired.

ECTS Users' Guide (February 2005), EU Commission, DG for Education and Culture

In allocating credit to courses, Schools should be guided by the following basic principles.

- 3.1. The ECTS works on a yearly norm of 60 credits for a full-time course (30 credits for a half-honor subject) over one academic year where one credit represents 20-25 hours estimated student input. The measure of one academic year is 40 weeks from the start of Michaelmas Term to the end of the annual examination period.

The duration of a programme leading to a particular award is also expressed in terms of 'credit volume', for example the TCD four-year honors Bachelor degree is 240 ECTS², while the ordinary Bachelor degree is 180 ECTS.

- 3.2. ECTS credits are assigned to course components/modules incorporating their associated assessment exercises and examinations, and also to other forms of structured student input, such as major projects, dissertations, practice placements, etc. where these do not form part of the assessment for a taught component which is itself assigned ECTS credits. As a rule, examination papers - with the exception of 'general' moderatorship examination papers - will not be credit bearing; the credit instead will attach to the associated taught element.
- 3.3. The ECTS credit is a measure of student input, and does not necessarily correlate to the number of contact hours, notably for example in the case of major projects or research dissertations. The calculation of student inputs should be based on such factors as the number of contact hours, the number and length of written or verbally presented assessment exercises, the amount of class preparation required for lecture, tutorials, laboratory classes, etc., private study time, writing examinations, clinical attendance, professional training placements, and so on.
- 3.4. The 'time required' for preparation, private study, project work, completion of written assignments, examinations, etc. should be gauged on the basis of "*a realistic estimation of the student workload required for the average student to achieve the learning outcomes established for each of the components*" (ECTS Users' Guide).
- 3.5. All course components, including major projects, research dissertations, practice placements, etc. should be constituted as modules, with module code, title and associated ECTS credits. Such modules are described as 'credit-bearing modules'.
- 3.6. A lecture course or other course component/module which is taken by two or more groups of students must carry the same credit weighting for all groups providing that all the teaching and assessment load is the same for all groups (for example, the Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses).

² Certain special purpose programmes, for example the 5-year medical and dental science programmes, will carry a higher programme credit volume. Special purpose non-graduate Diploma programmes may carry a lower programme credit volume.

- 3.7 ECTS credits are awarded to a student only upon successful completion of the course year. Progression from one year to the next is determined by course regulations. Students who fail a year of their course will not obtain credit for that year even if they have passed certain component courses.

Exceptions to this rule are one-year and part-year visiting students, who are awarded credit for individual modules successfully completed

- 3.8 The ECTS also requires a statement of the **credit level** of a given component within the overall programme, eg. 1 introductory or foundation level, 2 the intermediate level, 3 honor and 4 advanced honor levels. The credit level typically reflects the degree of prior knowledge of the subject and/or prior training in the methodologies associated with the discipline in question that students are expected to have on entry to, and completion of the module. For practical purposes, the credit level usually correlates to student standing and is indicated in the module code (the first digit after the subject prefix, eg. CH1S01 for a JF chemistry module, or LI4031 for a SS linguistics module). (In cases where the same components/ modules are taken by more than one class of students on the same programme, eg. SF and JS or JS and SS, reference to the designations 'foundation', 'intermediate', 'honors' and 'advanced honors' may help in deciding upon the appropriate level to assign.)

4. The Diploma Supplement

- 4.1 The Diploma Supplement is designed to provide supplementary information on the degree or diploma awarded, and will only be issued following the commencements or conferring ceremony.
- 4.2 The Supplement will contain the following information: title of degree in English, main subject area(s), language of instruction, credit volume of award (eg. 240 ECTS for honors Bachelor degree), level of award relative to National Framework of Qualifications (eg. Level 8 in the case of the honors Bachelor degree), general entry requirements eg. Leaving Certificate or equivalent), institutional marking scale, professional status of degree, and access to further study. Information on the national education system is also included.

The Supplement also contains information on the study programme followed by the degree/diploma holder, in the form of the modules taken, the ECTS credit value and level of individual modules, and the overall mark obtained by the student for each module, as well as overall grade. Only credit-bearing modules will be included.

Module code	Module title	Level*	Mark %	Credits
EC1040	Introduction to economic policy	1	62	10

- *for practical purposes, the level cited in TCD Diploma Supplements will be the student standing in the year of course in which they took the module in question.*

- 4.3 The schedule for implementation of the Diploma Supplement (Bachelor degrees and non-graduate diplomas) is as follows.
Honors Bachelor degrees from 2009: schools are currently being asked to sign off on module data (including ECTS credits) for the JF year 2005/06 and this data is currently being centrally recorded. This will extend to JF and SF for 2006/07, to JF, SF and JS for 2007/08, and finally to all years of course from 2008/09.

Ordinary Bachelor degree programmes: from 2009
Non-graduate diplomas: as soon as possible from 2007.

5. Practical considerations for schools

5.1 *Workload norms, the '5/10 ECTS rule' and ECTS in programme design*

The new funding allocation model introduced by the HEA in 2005 uses ECTS credits as a measure of student full-time equivalents, where 60 ECTS is taken as being equivalent to 1 full-time student year. Where the total ECTS credits falls below 60 for a student year, the funding received by the University will be adjusted proportionately. Part-time students will be funded on the basis of the ECTS credit weighting for the course year as a proportion of 60. The only instance where a credit weighting of more than 60 ECTS credits is recognized is in the case of one-calendar-year taught Masters' courses which carry a credit weighting of 90 ECTS. The 'tolerance' band of 55-65 ECTS that has operated in TCD up to now cannot be sustained in the light of this new funding allocation mechanism.

The '5/10 ECTS rule' is intended to make it easier for Schools to arrange their courses so as to arrive at a standard 60 ECTS for each course year. But it also aims to address the many imbalances in workload evident from the 2004/5 ECTS review in the course of which credit values were assigned as a measure of workload in existing courses with the result that many, if not most courses exceeded or fell short of the 60 credit norm (or 30/30 in the case of joint honor courses). The organization of courses into 5 and 10 credit 'slots' also aims to provide a framework for subject balance in multi-disciplinary programmes.

By approaching the allocation of credits from the top down rather than from the bottom up, course designers can use the ECTS as an aid to clarifying programme design, for example ensuring that elements shared between different programmes are of the right 'fit', and clarifying the balance between different elements within the curriculum, particularly in the case of multi-disciplinary programmes. Schools may choose to work at the higher (25 hours per credit) end of the scale or at the lower end (20 hours per credit). Either way, it is recommended that schools seek to identify models for the various types of courses/modules in their subject (lecture courses, laboratory work, language teaching, practice placements, etc.) and apply the models across all courses. In this way contact hour and workload norms can be standardised, for staff as well as for the various student cohorts, and the application of agreed models to new courses may simplify the design of new courses.

5.2 *ECTS and the Broad Curriculum*

From 2007/08 the BC cross-faculty courses, currently weighted at 6 ECTS, will be re-aligned at 5 ECTS. Students not wishing to take a BC course should have the opportunity of taking an alternative elective 5 ECTS in their main subject area(s).

5.3 *Defining modules (shared teaching, timetabling)*

A credit-bearing module should be a separately identifiable course component of 5/10/15/20 ECTS including assessment/examination, taken in its entirety by a particular cohort(s) of students, and which will have an overall assessment/examination result (may be P/F in the case of pass/fail modules). If only part of an existing module is taken by all students and the other part(s) only by a subset of the total students or by a different cohort of students, then it will be necessary to define separate credit-bearing modules.

All credit-bearing modules will have their own unique module code, title, and ECTS weighting and will be recorded as a formal part of the course structure for the relevant

degree programme(s) and recorded on the individual student record. All credit-bearing modules will appear on the Diploma Supplement, as indicated in the table under 4.2 above. Module titles should give information about the content but, ideally, should not require very frequent updating. Schools are asked to avoid using local timetabling designations such as 'Michaelmas/Hilary Term' or 'tutorials'.

Parts of a module, for example a series of lectures, may be shared between modules by timetabling the two modules together as a shared 'timetable event'. (School administrators should be consulted about possible timetable constraints.) Year-long modules which can also be taken as part-year or half options should be set up as two separate modules.

Where necessary for timetabling purposes, non-credit-bearing modules may be retained.

5.3 *Visiting students and ECTS*

The ECTS credits obtained by one-year visiting students will be the same for each module they take as for other classes of students taking the same module. If special assessment/examination arrangements are made for one-year visiting students, the assessment/examination elements should be calibrated so that they represent the equivalent load as that for all other students taking the module.

As noted in 5.2 above, year-long modules which can also be taken as part-year or half options should be set up as two separate modules. The ECTS credits attaching to a particular module will be the same for all students taking that module. (It should be noted that the greater the multiplicity of individual modules/ course components, the more work will be involved for the School in writing and updating course documentation, and in maintaining up-to-date module data for examination, timetabling and other reporting purposes.)

5.4 *ECTS and assessment/examination weightings*

The ECTS presupposes a correlation between the input required of a student measured in terms of ECTS credits and the proportion of marks allotted to a given component or module in the overall end of year result (including Broad Curriculum modules).

In the case of two-part moderatorships, the SS year coursework should amount to 60 ECTS (this may include the credits allocated to a 'general' examination paper). The calculation to determine degree classification (typically weighted JS carry-forward + weighted SS mark) should be de-coupled from the calculation of the SS year mark. This may necessitate the re-formatting of result spreadsheets at school level.

5.4 *ECTS, FTSE and resource allocation*

The Full-Time Student Equivalent calculation reflects the proportionality of a student's study programme in terms of the academic departments providing the teaching/supervision. For example, a SF student in TSM French and English will be split 0.5/0.5 to each of the academic units. This proportionality will also be reflected in the ECTS credits attaching to modules, and it is envisaged that in future years the annual FTSE calculations will be based on a count of the ECTS attaching to students' registered modules.

The staff and student FTSE is calculated each year and is used to calculate the staff/student ratio in academic departments. The student FTSE has also been used for some years as the basis for allocation of pay and non-pay grants to academic departments, and currently, weighted FTSE as a vehicle for allocating core annual grant monies to schools is a key feature of the new ARAM.

6. Documentation

- 6.1 Commencing in 2006/07, course and departmental literature (including academic transcripts) should contain information on required and elective modules with their associated ECTS credit weighting.
- 6.2 In the context of approved SOCRATES student mobility arrangements, module and ECTS credit and level details will be recorded on the Learning Agreement for each student participating in a Socrates mobility programme, both incoming and outgoing.

7. Other information

- 7.1 National Framework of Qualifications (NQF) – alignment of TCD awards

Honors Bachelor degrees:	level 8/10	240 ECTS
Ordinary Bachelor degrees:	level 7/10	180 ECTS
Non-graduate diplomas:	level 7/10	varies

NQF levels are stated in the CAO handbook and College Undergraduate Prospectus.

- 7.2 NQF levels and descriptors detailing learning outcomes at the award level for degrees and higher and postgraduate diplomas were approved by Council in 2005/06 and are reproduced in the General Regulations section of the 2006/07 University Calendar, Part I and – for postgraduate/graduate entry awards – in Part II. In the context of the implementation of the NQF in College, learning outcomes at the programme level are currently being developed for all non-graduate diplomas.
- 7.3 Statements about credit volume and NQF level of awards no longer extant (termed historic or legacy awards) will be developed and published on the College website in due course.
- 7.3 Credit Transfer
The position in Trinity remains that
- progression within a course and the award of degrees/diplomas is determined by reference to the relevant University, College and course regulations;
 - applications for admission will be assessed in relation to published entry requirements;
 - applications for admission to an abridged course will be assessed on the basis of an applicant's academic record/qualifications and the requirements of the programme in question.

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