

Tuning Project working paper



TUNING EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES IN EUROPE – PHASE II

STUDENT WORKLOAD: THE *TUNING* APPROACH ©

The need

While many countries in Europe are preparing the implementation of a two cycle system in accordance with the Bologna process, it becomes increasingly clear that there is a need to provide some simple reference points with regard to student workload. The issue of workload is related to the introduction of the ECTS credit system, both as a transfer and an accumulation system. ECTS is one of the tools for promoting comparability and compatibility in European Higher Education. The need for having clear agreed reference points also arises from the demand for transparency and fairness to students¹.

ECTS principles

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, abbreviated as ECTS, is based on a number of principles²:

- An academic year of a full-time student has an absolute value of 60 credits.
- 60 credits stand for an average workload of around 1500 hours, which corresponds to around 25 student work hours per credit.
- A programme of study as a whole, in relation to its academic and professional profile, is taken as the starting point for allocating credits to courses.
- Programmes of study are broken down into blocks or clusters of units, which should correspond to particular learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and understanding) and competences.
- A number of credits is allocated to each unit. Each of the units has its own learning outcomes.

The project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*,³ which focuses on learning outcomes and general academic (generic) competences and subject related competences has shown us that approaches to teaching, learning and assessment have an impact on credit allocation and, consequently, on workload.⁴

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¹ The term student is used in this paper for any type of learner.

² A detailed description of the ECTS features can be found in the information regarding the ECTS-label. This information is included in the Socrates-Erasmus application form which is available on the Europa Internet server of the European Commission: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/ects.html>.

³ More information about the Tuning project can be found on the Europa Internet server: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/Tuning.html>; or on the servers of the coordinating institutions:

University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain (www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm) or

University of Groningen, The Netherlands (www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm).

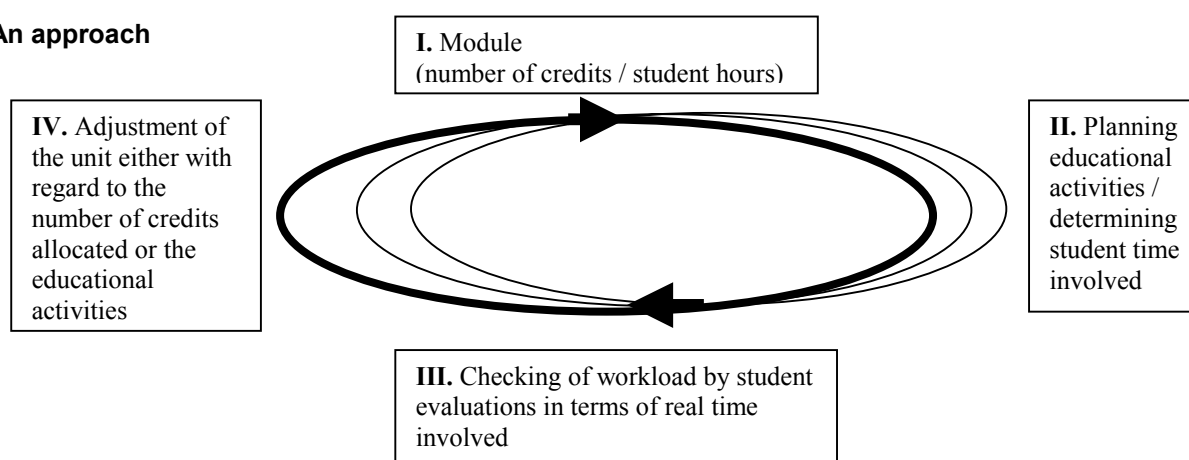
⁴ The definition of learning outcomes agreed upon in the Tuning project is the following: *Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of learning. They can refer to a single course unit or module or else to a period of studies, for example, a first or a second cycle*

A model for determining student workload in Higher Education programmes

When deciding on the student workload the following elements are of relevance:

- The student has a fixed amount of time depending on the programme he/she is taking.
- The overall responsibility for the design of a programme of studies and the number of credits allocated to courses lies with the responsible legal body, e.g. faculty executive board, etc.
- The final responsibility for deciding on the teaching, learning and assessment activities for a particular amount of student time lies with the teacher or the responsible team of staff.
- It is crucial that the teacher be aware of the specific learning outcomes to be achieved and the competences to be obtained.
- The teacher should reflect on which educational activities are more relevant to reach the learning outcomes of the unit.
- The teacher should have a notion of the notional student work time required for each of the activities selected for the unit.
- The student has a crucial role in the monitoring process to determine whether the estimated student workload is realistic.

An approach



The steps

To realize the overall objective, namely the development of an approach which leads to a truly valid record of a student's workload, implementation of the following steps is required.

I. Module

Modules or course units can have different loads in terms of the number of credits attached. Usually we distinguish between non-modularized systems and modularized systems. In a non-modularized system a course unit can have an arbitrary number of credits, although it is recommended not to make units too small to avoid fragmentation of a student's programme of study. However, it is also strongly advised not to make the units too big, to avoid creating big hurdles in the learning process. In a modularized system modules have a fixed workload, 5 credits for example, or a multiple of this number. The workload of a module is based on the total amount of tasks a student is expected to do as part of the overall programme of study. These tasks are defined with a view to the learning outcomes to be achieved, but they should also be described in terms of the notional time (work hours)

programme. Learning outcomes specify the minimum requirements for award of credit. Learning outcomes are formulated by academic staff.

The Tuning Project focuses on subject specific competences and generic competences. These competences represent a dynamic combination of attributes, abilities and attitudes. Fostering these competences are the object of educational programmes. Competences, which are obtained by the student, will be formed in various course units and assessed at different stages.

How are competences and learning outcomes related?

- Learning outcomes according to Tuning methodology should be formulated in terms of competences.
- Learning outcomes are minimum requirements of a unit or a programmes and what the learner knows and is able to do at the end of the learning experience.
- Competences may be developed to a greater degree than the level required by the learning outcome.

a student needs to achieve these learning outcomes. For example, a module of 5 credits allows for around 125 hours of work of a typical student. Learning outcomes are expressed in terms of competences to be obtained by the student.

II. Planning and determining student workload

Each module is based on a number of educational activities. They can be defined by considering the following aspects:

- *types of courses*: lecture, seminar, research seminar, exercise course, practical, laboratory work, guided personal study, tutorial, independent studies, internship, placement or 'stage', fieldwork, project work (group work), etc.;
- *types of teaching and learning activities*: attending lectures, performing of specific assignments (finding out about a specific topic and writing a report or an essay on these findings), practising technical skills, writing papers of increasing difficulty (in terms of length and the size and complexity of the material), reading books and papers, Learning how to give constructive criticism on the work of others, chairing meetings (of seminar groups, for example), working under time pressure, co-producing papers, presenting papers, making précis or summarising, etc:
- *types of assessment*: oral examination, written examination, oral presentation, test, paper (outcome based on the basis of well defined levels of performance), (final) thesis, report about an internship (on the basis of defined outcomes), report concerning executed fieldwork (on the basis of defined outcomes), continuous assessment, etc.

Each activity has its own student time-related characteristics. In planning activities the teacher should identify the time required of a typical student to perform each of them, including the time for preparation. The workload expressed in time should match the number of credits available for the course unit.

III. Checking the estimated workload through student evaluations

There are different methods to check whether the estimated student workload is correct. The most common method is the use of questionnaires to be completed by students, either weekly during the learning process or after the completion of the course.

IV. Adjustment of workload and/or educational activities

The outcome of the monitoring process or an updating of the course content might lead to an adjustment of the workload and/or the type of educational activities of the course unit/module. In a modularized model it will be necessary to adjust the amount of learning material and/or the types of teaching, learning and assessment activities, because the number of credits is fixed. In a non-modular model also the number of credits can be changed, but this will, of course, have an effect on other units, because the total amount of credits of the programme of study is fixed. An adjustment of workload and/or activities is required anyway when the monitoring process reveals that the estimated student workload does not correspond to the actual workload.

Explanatory note regarding the use of the Tuning model in practice

The Tuning approach is based on the correlation of a number of decisive elements:

- the course profile which indicates the place of the module in the overall programme of studies, as well as the competences to be developed in the module.
- the target group, the level of the module and any existing entrance requirements
- the learning outcomes formulated for the module
- the educational activities which suit best the learning outcomes to be achieved
- the types of assessment that are considered most appropriate to the learning outcomes
- the notional work time (in hours), based on student workload, required to perform the educational activities which are necessary to achieve the learning outcomes.

Tuning offers two forms that can be helpful in making decisions on and adjustment of the student workload. The first form is for the teacher to plan the educational module and estimate the student working hours involved. The second is for the student to indicate the actual amount of time spent on the module, thus providing an opportunity to check whether the estimated workload corresponds to reality. Students are given the form completed by the teacher where only the estimated workload is

not shown. By using these forms both teacher and students become aware of the learning outcomes, their relationship to the competences being developed and the notional student time involved for each of the tasks.

Samples of the two forms are attached to this paper together with an example of how they could be used in practice.

The example focuses on generic competences which, in the Tuning consultation process with graduates, employers and academics, were ranked lower in the learning process. Furthermore, a combination of educational activities has been chosen, which covers different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. This is only to illustrate how these approaches can be used. **A typical course unit might be expected to be much more straightforward and therefore easier to plan.** In the example level indicators are also introduced as an illustration of how they could be used in practice. Two levels are distinguished here within the first cycle: Bachelor level 1 and Bachelor level 2. The first level stands for obtaining basic competences (knowledge and skills) regarding the subject area. The second level expects the use and deepening of these basic knowledge and the skills required to develop understanding of the topic. Finally, it has to be stressed that the example does not intend to give an indication about the number of lectures per credit, the most appropriate educational activities, or possible titles for lectures, etc. The hypothetical example is **only intended to serve as a tool** for discussion and a practical way to show how competences, learning outcomes, educational activities, levels, credits and student workload are related.

*Tuning Management Committee
March 2004*

PLANNING FORM FOR AN EDUCATIONAL MODULE

©

(to be completed by the teacher)

Programme of Studies:

Name of the module:

Target group:

Level of the unit:

Entrance requirements:

Number of ECTS credits:

Competences to be developed:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Learning outcomes	Educational activities	Estimated student work time in hours	Assessment

**FORM FOR CHECKING WORKLOAD OF AN
EDUCATIONAL MODULE ©
(to be completed by the student)**

Programme of Studies:

Name of the module:

Target group:

Level of the unit:

Entrance requirements:

Number of ECTS credits:

Competences to be developed:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Learning outcomes	Educational activities	Estimated student work time in hours	Assessment

TUNING PLANNING FORM FOR AN EDUCATIONAL MODULE ©

(to be completed by the teacher)

Type of course: Subsidiary course
 Name of the module: Intercultural Communication in Multicultural Societies
 Target group: First cycle History students
 Level of the unit: Bachelor level 2 (intermediate)
 Number of ECTS credits: 5 ECTS (notional student working time: 125 hours)

Competences to be developed:

1. Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism (related to modules X, Y, Z)
2. Capacity to work in multicultural contexts (related to modules A, Z, J)
3. Teamwork (related to modules)
4. Oral and written communication (related to modules)
5. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice (related to modules)
6. Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries
7. Capacity to understand structures of cultural systems (related to modules)
8. Capacity to have an independent judgement on current related issues

Learning outcomes	Educational activities	Estimated student work time in hours	Assessment
<p>Familiarity with diverse approaches to culture and understanding of their implications.</p> <p>Understanding and capacity to use in an adequate academic context key concepts such as cultural identity, multiculturalism, integration, assimilation, segregation, context and meaning, etc.</p> <p>Development by the student of his or her own mental frameworks in relation to:</p> <p>a) the various layers of culture</p> <p>b) the key issues in the current debate concerning different degrees of tolerance of cultural symbols</p>	Background questionnaire	½ hour	Class Participation * (40%)
	Lecture 1: <i>Approaches to culture</i>	1 hour	
	Group work on definitions of culture	1 hour	
	Class discussion	1 hour	
	Reading assignment	5 hours	
	Class seminar on reading assignment	½ hour	
	Lecture 2: <i>Perception and Culture</i>	1 hour	
	Reading assignment on the lecture	3 hours	
	Class seminar on reading assignment	½ hour	
	Lecture 3: <i>Cultural identities, group, individual and society</i>	1 hour	
	Reading assignment on the lecture	5 hours	Oral presentations (all groups) (12%)
	Class seminar on reading assignment	½ hour	
	Lecture 4: <i>Symbols, heroes and values</i>	1 hour	
	Writing and presentation of Team work 1: <i>Cultural symbols in the current debate in newspapers</i> (search for relevant articles on the web, setting up of individual dossiers, reading and analysis)	15 hours	
		3 hours	

Understanding and being able to identify the different dimensions of cultural differences in approaches to: space, time, equity, hierarchy, high-low context, etc	Group work on 8 short case studies followed by class debate		One written case study to be analysed (10%)
	Presentation of the theoretical perspective on the cultural dimension	1 and ½ x 8 = 12 hours	
	Background reading of selected texts	12 hours	
		1 hour	
Understanding processes of a) acculturation b) transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism and capacity to articulate own /somebody else's processes	Lecture 5: <i>Presentation of Benet's model</i> , followed by critical perspective by the group.	1 hour	Write a two-page report based on personal experience (8%)
	Lecture 6: <i>Process of acculturation</i> , followed by identification of significant steps by the group	1 hour	
	Reading assignment	4hours	
	Personal reflection of themes presented in the lectures	1 hour	
		3 hours	
Understanding obstacles and roads to intercultural communication. Development of comprehensive listening and capacity to answer in the appropriate cultural key Development of an attitude of respect and appreciation of diversity	Panel of presenters from different cultures and debate. Reflection exercise	3 hours	* Self-evaluation (with guides) (8%)
	Lecture 7: <i>Intercultural Communication. Key issues</i>	1 hour	
	Reading assignment	3 hours	
	Personal reflection of themes presented in the lectures	1 hour	
	Film: "No Man's Land".	2 hours	
	Class Discussion about the film	1 hour	
	Lecture 8: <i>The role of perception in intercultural communication</i>	1 hour	
	Reading assignment	2 hours	
	Which are the main three points of the assigned reading? Debate in class	2 hours	
	Visit to NGO or other type of organisation that works with people from other cultures	3 hours	

Understanding the current challenge of migration and the possible solutions for the future	Lecture 9: <i>Value of Diversity. Migration: variety at our door</i>	1 hour	Oral presentations (all groups) (12%)
	Reading assignment	5 hours	
	Class seminar on reading assignment	1 hour	
	Lecture 10: <i>Managing Diversity</i>	1 hour	
	Lecture 11: <i>Images and reality of Multiculturalism</i>	1 hour	
Understanding of the debate about models of society and policies for different cultures and migrant groups	Writing and presentation of Team work 2: <i>Towards Cultural Cohesion. Solutions, laws and policies in Multicultural State</i> (search for relevant information, reading and analysis)	15 hours	
		3 hours	
Awareness of different approaches and issues in research in intercultural communication	Lecture 12: <i>Main research approaches</i>	1 hour	Learning Report (10%)
	Group work on Different Research issues	1 hour	
	Preparation of Learning Report	3 hours	
		1 hour	

125 hours

100%

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* Class participation, which includes attendance, preparation of reading assignment and class discussion. This relates to the whole course.

TUNING FORM FOR CHECKING WORKLOAD OF AN EDUCATIONAL MODULE ©

(to be completed by the student)

Type of course Subsidiary course
 Name of the module: Intercultural Communication in Multicultural Societies
 Target group: First cycle History students
 Level of the unit: Bachelor level 2 (intermediate)
 Number of ECTS credits: 5 ECTS (notional student working time: 125 hours)

Competences to be developed:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism (related to modules X, Y, Z) | 5. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice (related to modules) |
| 2. Capacity to work in multicultural contexts (related to modules A, Z, J) | 6. Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries |
| 3. Teamwork (related to modules) | 7. Capacity to understand structures of cultural systems (related to modules) |
| 4. Oral and written communication (related to modules) | 8. Capacity to have an independent judgement on current related issues |

Learning outcomes	Educational activities	Estimated student work time in hours	Assessment
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	Lecture 1: <i>Approaches to culture</i>		
	Group work on definitions of culture		
	Class discussion		
	Reading assignment		
	Class seminar on reading assignment		
	Lecture 2: <i>Perception and Culture</i>		Oral presentations (all groups) (12%)
	Reading assignment on the lecture		
	Class seminar on reading assignment		
	Lecture 3: <i>Cultural identities, group, individual and society</i>		
	Reading assignment on the lecture		
	Class seminar on reading assignment		
	Lecture 4: <i>Symbols, heroes and values</i>		
	Writing and presentation of Team work 1: <i>Cultural symbols in the current debate in newspapers</i> (search for relevant articles on the web, setting up of individual dossiers, reading and analysis)		

Understanding and being able to identify the different dimensions of cultural differences in approaches to: space, time, equity, hierarchy, high-low context, etc	Group work on 8 short case studies followed by class debate		One written case study to be analysed (10%)
	Presentation of the theoretical perspective on the cultural dimension		
	Background reading of selected texts		
Understanding processes of c) acculturation d) transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism and capacity to articulate own /somebody else's processes	Lecture 5: <i>Presentation of Bennet's model</i> , followed by critical perspective by the group.		Write a two-page report based on personal experience (8%)
	Lecture 6: <i>Process of acculturation</i> , followed by identification of significant steps by the group		
	Reading assignment		
	Personal reflection of themes presented in the lectures		
Understanding obstacles and roads to intercultural communication. Development of comprehensive listening and capacity to answer in the appropriate cultural key Development of an attitude of respect and appreciation of diversity	Panel of presenters from different cultures and debate. Reflection exercise		* Self-evaluation (with guides) (8%)
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	Reading assignment		
	Personal reflection of themes presented in the lectures		
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	Lecture 8: <i>The role of perception in intercultural communication</i>		
	Reading assignment		
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	Visit to NGO or other type of organisation that works with people from other cultures		

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	Reading assignment		
	Class seminar on reading assignment		
	Lecture 10: <i>Managing Diversity</i>		
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	Writing and presentation of Team work 2: <i>Towards Cultural Cohesion. Solutions, laws and policies in Multicultural State</i> (search for relevant information, reading and analysis)		
Awareness of different approaches and issues in research in intercultural communication	Lecture 12: <i>Main research approaches</i>		Learning Report (10%)
	Group work on Different Research issues		
	Preparation of Learning Report		

..... hours

100%

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* Class participation, which includes attendance, preparation of reading assignment and class discussion. This relates to the whole course.