

Review of the ECTS Users' Guide

TPG C, 17 April 2026



Main changes – introduction, principles, scope

- Explain the background to broadened use of ECTS, e.g. for micro-credentials
- Scope of ECTS
 - focus remains higher education, use in other sectors is not prohibited and at the discretion of national authorities
 - clarify: only formally-recognised education institutions can award credits (applies to higher education and other sectors, text change “education provider” → “education institution”)
 - robust quality assurance arrangements always a minimum requirement – in higher education ESG apply, in other sectors EQF Annex, in VET EQAVET
 - national authorities have discretion whether and which institutions to authorise, but may only authorise education institutions that have adequate quality assurance in place

Main changes – other key features

- Terminology clarified: more consistent use of “should” and “must”, other terms avoided
- Credits certified in a digital format: change “must” to “should” to reflect remaining challenges
- Clarify that the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) is obligatory for higher education
- Clarify that credit recognition, especially between levels, is in the recognising institution's/authority's autonomy
- Encompass different scenarios that can ensure automatic recognition
- Underlined that ECTS standard formats (course catalogue, transcript, etc.) are general-purpose and not only for mobility
- Clarify that formal education providers award credits after validation – not non-formal providers themselves

Main changes - planning, design and delivery of learning opportunities

- Additional “further information” box on micro-credentials to give more context and key definitions based on the European approach set out in EU Council Recommendation 2022/C 243/02
- Revise info box on student-centred learning
- Additional guidance on levels of short, stand-alone learning opportunities, e.g. micro-credentials – underpinned by the idea that levels are indicated to enhance transparency, not necessarily with the same formal status as full qualifications are assigned to a QF level
- Text on grade transparency moved to this section: generally relevant and not only for credit mobility

Main changes – credit accumulation

- Clarifications re. credits based on non-formal or informal learning
 - awarded by (formal) education institutions, based on a validation process – not by non-formal learning providers themselves
 - learners can apply for validation if they apply for a programme or are already enrolled in one
 - credits based on validation may come with a grade
 - providers of non-formal learning may issue non-accredited EDC credentials, but may not award ECTS credits themselves
- Final decision on the recognition and stacking of credits towards of a qualification always lies with the education institution
 - in line with the applicable regulations or treaties (e.g. LRC)
 - at the same level or across levels

Main changes – mobility and recognition

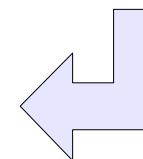
- Clarify that LRC is only binding in higher education, but its principles may also be applied in other sectors/across sectors
- Dimension of quality added to the guidance on substantial differences, while emphasising that credits underpinned by quality assurance arrangements in line with the key features should be trusted.
- Underlined that credits can be recognised at different levels, provided the learning outcomes match
- Guidance re. small discrepancies in the number of credits reviewed.
- Additional context on automatic recognition in EHEA policy documents in “further information” box
- Additional info box on the UNESCO Global Convention

Main changes – grade transparency information

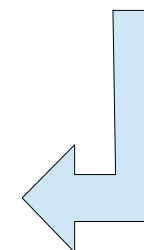
- Proposal refined to focus on standardised description to use in
 - Transcript of Records
 - Diploma Supplement
- ECTS reference grades indicate levels of learning outcomes achievement for comparison
- Remove link to a presumed statistical distribution – a normal distribution is not necessarily to be expected
- Keep grade distribution as optional, but separate standard information

Local grade	Label	Definition	ECTS reference grade	Grade distribution (optional)
Examples:				
X	Excellent	70-80 pts	A	15%
Y	Good	55-69 pts	C	80%
Z	Minimum	45-54 pts	E	5%
	Failed	0-44 pts	F	n/a

Conversion always possible



Conversion using grade distribution
(= ECTS 2015 approach) possible if available



Timeline: Next Steps

When	What
9/10 March 2026	BFUG – discuss draft 3.1
15 May 2026	Draft 4.0 – incorporating any points discussed at BFUG
15 July 2026	BFUG members to raise any remaining concerns with draft 4.0
5 September	Draft 4.1 submitted to BFUG Board, if required (or reaffirm draft 4.0)
29 September 2026	BFUG Board – review of final draft 4.1
5/6 November 2026	BFUG – adopt final draft 4.1
Q2 2027	Iași-Chișinău Ministerial Conference

Thank you!