

European Higher Education System (The Bologna Process and ECTS Credits)

Overview

In 1999, the Bologna Process was instituted to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on academic exchange and regional convergence across Europe. The purpose was to facilitate increased mobility and exchange between institutions and countries, as well as a standardized measure of educational progression and credit recognition.

The Bologna Process uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), a standard of awarding credits at post-secondary institutions within Bologna Process signatory countries. The system is based on a full annual load of 60 ECTS credits (30 per semester).

Educational Timeline

The standard requirement for entry into a Bologna-compliant first cycle degree program is whichever higher secondary leaving certificate or diploma traditionally is required for entry into a specific type of institution for the relevant country (e.g. university, applied sciences university, post-secondary vocational training college, etc.).

- A typical 3+2 system would have 180 ECTS for a 3-year Bachelor’s degree and an additional 120 ECTS for a two-year Master’s degree (300 ECTS total)
- A 4+1 system would have 240 ECTS for a 4-year Bachelor’s degree and an additional 60 ECTS for a one-year Master’s degree (300 ECTS total)

Note: Some First Cycle Bologna Compliant Bachelor’s degrees are equivalent to US Bachelor’s degrees (e.g. 240 ECTS degree). Other First Cycle Bologna Compliant Bachelor’s degrees are not equivalent to US Bachelor’s degrees (e.g. 180 ECTS degree). Equivalence will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Credit Conversion

The US credit system is based on the assumption that a standard full-time student load is 15-16 credit hours per semester or 30-32 credit hours per year. Students entering the US higher education system from the Bologna system have ECTS credits converted to US semester credit hours by dividing the total number of ECTS credits in half. Because 60 ECTS represents the full-time student load for an academic year in the Bologna Process, and 30 credits represents the full-time student load for an academic year in the US system, 2 ECTS credits is equal to 1 US semester credit.

To calculate ECTS credits into US credits, multiply the ECTS credits times .5 (or divide in half)

ECTS Credit	US Semester Credits
3	1.5
4	2
6	3
8	4
10	5
12	6
24	12 (minimum full-time course load)
30	15 (normal course load)

Required Documents If Degree Has Been Earned

First Cycle Bologna Complaint Degree Transcript of Record with Diploma Supplement
 Second Cycle Bologna Compliant Degree Transcript of Record with Diploma Supplement

Required Documents If Degree Has Not Been Earned

Transcript including ECTS credits awarded and terms attended

Grading Scale (May not be all inclusive):

Definition	ECTS Scale	US Grade	Quality Points	
Excellent	A	A	4	
Very Good	B	B+	4	
Good	C	B	3	
Satisfactory	D	C+	2	
Sufficient	E	C	1	lowest passing grade
Fail	FX	F	0	
Fail	F	F	0	

Member Countries

Albania	Andorra	Armenia
Austria	Azerbaijan	Belarus
Belgium Flemish Community	Belgium French Community	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus
Czech Republic	Denmark	Estonia
Finland	European Commission	France
Georgia	Germany	Greece
Hungary	Holy See	Iceland
Ireland	Italy	Kazakhstan
Latvia	Liechtenstein	Lithuania
Luxembourg	Macedonia	Malta
Moldova	Monaco	Montenegro
Netherlands	Norway	Poland
Portugal	Romania	Russian Federation
San Marino	Serbia	Slovakia
Slovenia	Spain	Sweden
Switzerland	Turkey	Ukraine
United Kingdom		

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