

Understanding and applying ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) in practice



Janet Mifsud¹, Anna McElhatton², Mark Zammit¹, AnneMarie Dimech¹

¹Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics; ²Department of Food Sciences and Nutrition; University of Malta, Msida Malta

Malta...



Malta

- The first known inhabitants in historic times were the Phoenicians, followed by the Carthaginians and Romans and Arabs.
- The Knights of the Order of St John, founded before the First Crusade (1099) arrived in 1534, after King Charles of Spain donated the island to them.



Malta

- The earliest members of the Order came from throughout Europe and were of noble birth. Its distinctive emblem the Cross of Malta, whose eight points represent the Beatitudes, and also 8 'langues' of the order.
- Eight pointed cross - First mini EU?
- Grand Master La Valette strengthened defenses and built new capital city (Valletta) and set up the Universitae Melitansae.



VALLETTA

The University of Malta today

- Founded in 1777, now 5km outside Valletta, a campus University, with separate premises for Medical School and Faculty of Health Sciences at the main teaching hospital, Mater Dei Hospital.
- 12,000 students,
- Over 1000 from other countries



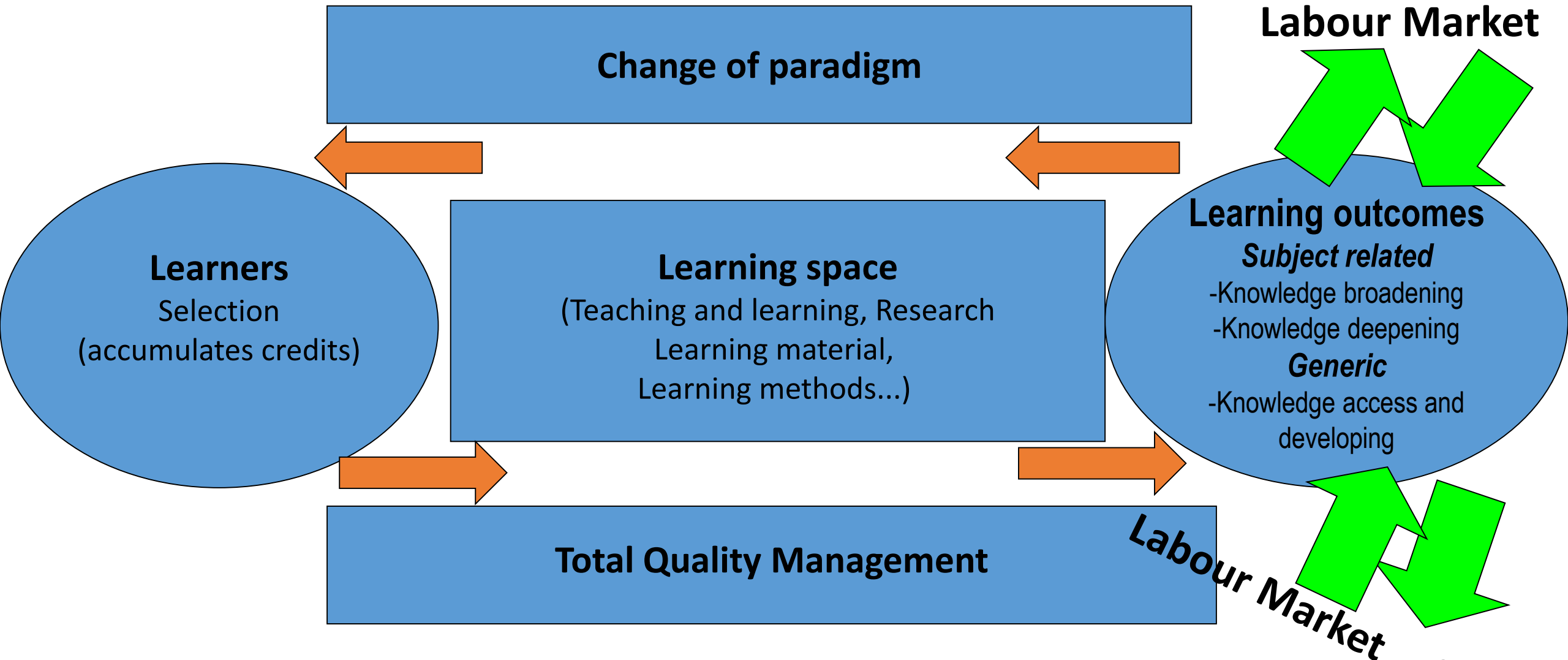
What is ECTS?

What is ECTS?

- ECTS is a **tool** used in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for making studies and courses more transparent and thus helping to enhance the quality and mobility of higher education degrees.
- The pan-European Prevention Science ECTS framework aims to provide students with **a clear and transparent guide** as to how various qualifications and qualification frameworks, across various EU institutions, integrate with each other.
- **A Student centred** system, based on student **workload** required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study, specified in terms of **learning outcomes**.

Why ECTS?

The University Learning Chain



Overview

Goals <i>Declaration</i>	Objectives <i>Measurable</i>	Tools <i>User's friends</i>
Social Dimension	3 Cycles Learner centred Academic Recognititon Quality Assurance and Enhancement	Qualifications Framework <i>Learning Outcomes</i> <i>Levels, Credits</i>
Citizen of Europe		ECTS Diploma Supplement <i>Credits</i> <i>Common structure</i>
Employability		Standards and Guidelines / Register
Lifelong Learning		

Terminology

Learning outcomes / competences

- Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand, and / or be able to do at the end of a period of learning

Workload

- A quantitative measure of all learning activities that may be feasibly required for the achievement of the learning outcomes

Credit

- A quantified means of expressing the volume of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workload

Terminology

Profile

- Either the specific (subject) field(s) of learning of a qualification or the broader aggregation of clusters of qualifications of programmes from different fields that share a common emphasis or purpose (e.g. an applied vocational as opposed to more theoretical academic studies)

Levels

- Representing a series of sequential steps (a development continuum), expressed in terms of generic outcomes, against which typical qualifications can be positioned

ECTS : a double system

- A **transfer system** : credits are recognised and allow to change university ; studies taken at another institution replace part of the home curriculum.
- An **accumulation system** : one year of full time work by a student gives 60 credits.

= the two sides of a same coin for the recognition of studies.

Workload:

- **1600** average working hours per year, it should correspond to 60 credits;
- Allocation of credits should be done on the departmental/faculty level;
- It should be top-down, the number of credits should be distributed along the different parts of the programme for the year. The course units should not be too long.

ECTS features

- 1 credit stands for 25-30 hours of work (on the base of 38-42 weeks)
- A normal course programme = 60 credits per academic year.
 - Undergraduate studies = 180/240 credits.
 - Graduate (Master) studies = 90/120 credits.
- A full academic year (12 month programme) can have a maximum of 75 credits.
- A cycle (Master) programme of 90 credits is normally based on a length of 14-15 study months (=57-60 weeks)

Learning outcomes and competences

Why focus on competences ?

- To increase transparency of professional profiles in study programmes
- To shift to a more learner oriented approach to education
- To fit with LLL which requires more flexibility
- To develop higher levels of employability and citizenship
- To develop a shared language for consultation with all stakeholder

Difference between learning outcomes and competences

- **Learning outcomes** are formulated by the academic staff on the basis of input from internal and external stakeholders.
 - statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand, and/or able to demonstrate after completions of learning
- **Competences** are obtained or developed by the learners during the process of learning. They are implemented in a professional context.
 - a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities.

Accumulation and recognition

- Credits are always awarded in the context of a coherent programme of study.
- Credits are not interchangeable automatically from one context to another.
- In the case of LLL, the institution must always evaluate the work done or competences obtained before this/these can be included in the institution's own degree programme.
- Final examinations at the end of a programme of study, are intended to prove that the overall learning outcomes have been achieved.

The ECTS tools

- The **course catalogue** (indicating the level, number of credits, learning outcomes and assessment), which can be consulted on the internet.
- The **learning agreement** (signed by the appropriate home and host authorities and the student), for automatic recognition.
- The **transcript of records**
- The **application form**
- The **ECTS grading scale or rating scheme** : A= the top 10 % ; B = the next 25 % ; C = the following 30 % ; D = the following 25 % ; E = the final 10 % . (the minimum number of the cohort must be around 100).

How to implement ECTS

- Non EU institutions should be aware on how to develop their internal quality assurance procedures, create credit allocations for their programmes, or components, and validate them according to their national and/or institutional rules as well as according to ECTS in order to facilitate student mobility.

Evaluation

- **Internal Quality Enhancement System**
 - Description of modules and all learning and teaching relevant information on Intranet
 - Learning and teaching material on Intranet (comparable to open-source facilities: discussion groups, mailing lists, etc.)
 - Every semester:
 - evaluation of teaching and learning (student questionnaire) – not yet published (teacher receives the filled-in questionnaires)
 - Evaluation of workload (student questionnaire plus evaluation in module oriented working groups)
- **„Watchdogs“:**
 - Internal Faculty and Study Boards (all groups of university members, incl. students are represented)

Thank you