

## FRAMEWORK FOR THE ATRIBUTION OF CREDIT POINTS TO LEARNING OUTCOMES

### 1. QUALIFICATIONS, UNITS AND CREDIT POINTS

In the ECVET European Recommendation<sup>1</sup>, learning outcomes ‘means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence’.

According to Cedefop (2004), learning outcomes are a “*set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process*”<sup>2</sup>. This definition is focusing at the dimension of achieved learning outcomes in a view of employability and labour market. It can be differentiated from the expected or anticipated learning outcomes based on a given VET study programme or an education and training process.

According to Tissot (2004)<sup>2</sup>, learning outcomes are a precise statement of what a learner can do once credits have been successfully gained.

Learning outcomes can be considered (and are considered in an Anglo-Saxon tradition) as anchored in a qualification framework that defines levels:

- It could then be appropriate to anchor the credits or minimum numbers of credits to certain levels within a given qualification framework.
- It would mean that the credits are anchored within the levels and have direct consequences on the rules for accumulation of credits while introducing a new qualitative (level) dimension in the credit definition.

In 2005, the Report of the Credit Transfer Technical Working Group, mentioned that ‘a credit system contributes to the improvement of the quality of processes of validation and more especially of validating vocational training. Such a system reinforces the links between the system of qualification and the labour market. It also enables the evaluation and the validation of non-formal learning outcomes.’<sup>3</sup>

Credits are foremost meant to serve as quantitative measurement of parts within a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

<sup>2</sup> Cedefop; Tissot, P. (ed.) *Terminology of vocational training policy: a multilingual glossary for an enlarged Europe*. Luxembourg: Publication Office, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2005). *European Credit System for VET (ECVET) Technical Specifications (Report of the Credit Transfer Technical Working Group)*. Brussels: Credit Transfer Technical Working Group, 2005.

According to the definition of the European Commission<sup>4</sup>, a credit system is a systematic way of describing an educational programme by attaching credits to its components.

A course programme is characterized by a certain number of resources invested in and calculated on the basis of the learner workload. In the ECVET basic approach, the focus is set on the VET programme allowing the learner to have a good command of a given combination of knowledge, skills and competences which correspond to a professional profile.

Credit for “learning outcomes (i.e. credit) designates individuals’ learning outcomes which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications”<sup>5</sup>.

Credit points are one of the ECVET technical specifications which contribute to ECVET implementation at national and European levels. Credit points are used by authorities, VET providers, competent bodies and learners to support arrangements for accumulation of recognition for learning outcomes towards a qualification and for transnational mobility. Credit points are allocated to qualifications and also to the set units which make up a qualification.<sup>6</sup>

Credit points, like credit for units of learning outcome, are awarded whatever the learning modes. Credit points are awarded:

- at the same time as the units of learning outcome;
- if necessary, after assessment of learning outcomes which are part of a unit of learning outcome.

A certain number of credit points are assigned to a particular qualification. The units that make up this qualification are worth a certain number of credit points, whose total must correspond to the total number of credit points of the qualification.

*Table 1: Example of credit points awarded to a qualification and its units.*

Qualification/units	Credit points
Qualification	60 points
Unit 1	20 points
Unit 2	15 points
Unit 3	10 points
Unit 4	15 points

(Source: adapted from the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2005). *European Credit System for VET (ECVET) Technical Specifications (Report of the Credit Transfer Technical Working Group)*. Brussels: Credit Transfer Technical Working Group, p. 13, 2005.)

<sup>4</sup> Parlement européen; Conseil de l'Union européenne (2009). *Recommandation du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 18 juin 2009 établissant le système européen de crédit d'apprentissages pour l'enseignement et la formation (ECVET)*. Journal officiel de l'Union européenne, C 155, 08.07.09, pp. 11-18.

<sup>5</sup> Parlement européen; Conseil de l'Union européenne (2009). *Recommandation du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 18 juin 2009 établissant le système européen de crédit d'apprentissages pour l'enseignement et la formation (ECVET)*. Journal officiel de l'Union européenne, C 155, 08.07.09, pp. 11-18.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2005). *European Credit System for VET (ECVET) Technical Specifications (Report of the Credit Transfer Technical Working Group)*. Brussels: Credit Transfer Technical Working Group, 2005.

Credit points are characterized by an EQF-level.

Table 2: Example of credit points awarded to a qualification by EQF level.

EQF Levels	Credit points level
4	Points L4
3	Points L3
2	Points L2
1	Points L1

(Source: adapted from the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2005). *European Credit System for VET (ECVET) Technical Specifications (Report of the Credit Transfer Technical Working Group)*. Brussels: Credit Transfer Technical Working Group, p. 14, 2005.)

It is a matter of principle that credit points may be transferred, within certain limits as defined by national systems, between qualifications at different levels. Thus, the credit points allocated to a qualification may comprise a certain number of points from different levels<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The competent body, responsible of the qualification, fixes the EQF-level of the qualification regarding criteria and descriptors contained in the EQF specifications.

## 2. HOW TO ALLOCATE CREDIT POINTS TO QUALIFICATIONS AND TO UNITS?

Allocation of credit points to a qualification is based on using an agreement according to which 60 points are allocated to the learning outcomes expected to be achieved in a year of formal full time VET.

As specified in the ECVET European Recommendation, *“for a given qualification, one formal learning context is taken as a reference and, on the basis of the convention the total number of points is assigned for that qualification. From this total, ECVET points are then allocated to each unit according to their relative weight within the qualification.”*<sup>8</sup>

The number of credit points expresses the relative weight/significance of a unit of learning outcome. According to the ECVET Recommendation, the allocation of ECVET points is subject to the following approaches or a combination of them:

- **different stakeholders** “value” the different units of learning outcome which are part of the qualification according to the relative importance of the units of learning outcome for the labour market, for progression to other qualification levels or for social integration;
- the **complexity**, scope and volume of learning outcomes in the unit (i.e. the complexity, scope and volume of knowledge, skills and competence) in relation to the learning outcomes of the overall qualification. Skills and competences in the unit are evaluated with regard to their share in the overall skills and competences of the entire qualification;
- the **effort necessary** for a learner (estimation of the learners’ effort, workload or learning time needed) to achieve the required learning outcomes of the unit.

Credit points represent the volume of learning outcomes achieved by the individual.

Credit points are:

- acquired by the individual at the same time as the units, sub-units and, if necessary, part of a unit are achieved;
- accumulated within the learning pathway;
- used to indicate the progress of the learner;
- used to indicate the completion of an individual learning pathway leading to a qualification.

Credit points may be used to allow a learner:

- to move from one qualification to another within the same EQF level;
- to move from one level of qualification to another;
- to move from a learning system to another.

Credit points are not automatically recognized. Recognition is a decision taken at national level by the competent bodies responsible of the qualification or of its implementation (training institutions, employers, ministries, social partners, professional organizations, chambers of commerce...).

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<sup>8</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).



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But, credit points linked to the EQF-levels might increase the predictability of recognition decisions. They might facilitate the conclusion of individual learning agreements and collective recognition conventions at sectoral, regional, national or European level. These recognition conventions are part of the *Memorandum of Understanding* and/or of the individual *ECVET Learning Agreement*.

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## WEBSITE REFERENCES

- [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ecvet\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ecvet_en.htm)
- <http://ec.europa.eu/eqf>
- <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu>
- <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/fr/events-and-projects/projects/learning-outcomes>

## ANNEX I – TECHNICAL SHEET

- 1- This framework **aims to provide**:
  - a. a description of a Credit System;
  - b. methods for allocating Credit Points to Qualifications and Units.
- 2- This framework is intended **to be used** in determining:
  - a. the allocation of Credit Points to Qualifications and to its Units of Learning Outcome.
- 3- This framework is intended **for the use of** schools, public bodies and other private enterprises who participate in European mobility projects.
- 4- This framework is intended **to be applied** in the context of ECVET implementation, specifically, to recognize the learning outcomes acquired by VET learners in a variety of learning contexts, such as, when learners participate in European mobility projects.
- 5- **Phase and Stage of the Pedagogical Circuit** in which the Framework **should be used**:
  - Phase 1: Before Mobility**
  - Stage 2: Preparing the Recognition Process**