

ECIU Recognition Accord

Joint declaration from ECIU member universities on mutual recognition of ECIU learning opportunities

Version 1 as approved by the ECIU University Board on 9 June 2022 in Kaunas.

Purpose

The purpose of this accord is to facilitate learning across ECIU universities to contribute to meeting admission criteria, programme outcomes, or exemption requirements of members via the mutual recognition of such learning.

Mutual recognition of ECIU learning opportunities

The ECIU University Board declares that:

- a) ECIU learning opportunities offered by any of the ECIU member universities are recognised as higher education when they meet quality standards as referred to in Appendix I in this document.
- b) Successful completion of an ECIU learning opportunity, from any of the ECIU member universities and documented with an ECIU agreed credential, is recognised by any of the other ECIU member universities and may be assigned ECTS credits by the providing institution or the learner's home institution.

A recognised ECIU learning opportunity may be included in a degree, and/or it may be mentioned in the Diploma Supplement, after being approved by a qualified authority at the learner's home institution.

Validation of the accord

This accord is made valid for challenges and micro-modules offered by ECIU partner institutions. The accord may be reviewed and approved according to the ECIU and its constituent members' academic governance structures as the ECIU develops into the following phases of the alliance.



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Appendix I

Definitions

The following definitions are adopted by ECIU member institutions in the context of ECIU University:

Recognition: A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities. (Lisbon Recognition Convention, 1997.)

Programme: Higher education provision in its broadest sense, including provision that is not part of a programme leading to a formal degree. The programme is defined by ECTS credits and learning outcomes at the correct level according to the national qualifications' framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. (Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015.)

Qualification: The formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. (European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.)

Higher Education: Study approved according to agreed quality standards and offered by an accredited higher education provider. In the case of ECIU learning opportunities, offered by any of the ECIU member universities. The learning outcomes are assessed against transparent standards and attainment of these by the student is certified by an official credential. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated. (Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015.)

ECIU Learning Opportunities: In the ECIU ecosystem, ECIU Learning Opportunities are nano, mini and standard challenges, and micro modules. An ECIU Learning Opportunity is a period of learning that is defined by a statement of learning outcomes and a defined workload and may or may not be assigned a corresponding number of ECTS credits by the providing institution. The learning is certified by a credential.

Credential: A proof of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a programme of study. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent standards. The credential is owned by the learner. (The European Approach to Micro-Credentials, 2020.)

Appendix II

Governing documents

The following are the main documents that govern higher education provision in Europe, and which the Recognition Accord refers to.

- (1) The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997) aims to facilitate the recognition of qualifications granted in one party in another party. It provides that requests should be assessed in a fair manner and within a reasonable time. The recognition can only be refused if the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country and the responsibility is on its educational institution to prove that it is.
- (2) In the Bologna declaration (1999) the ministers of higher education in Europe committed to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education. The following Bologna process has produced these agreements and documents:
 - a. Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) was adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2005 and revised in 2015. The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery. The ESG are also applicable to all higher education including transnational and cross-border provision. In the ESG document the term “programme” refers to higher education in its broadest sense, including that which is not part of a programme leading to a formal degree.
 - b. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) (2015) is a tool of the European Higher Education Area for making studies and courses more transparent. It helps students to move between countries and to have their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised. ECTS allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload.

- c. The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (2018) was first adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2005 and was last revised at the Paris Conference in 2018. The overarching framework sets the parameters within which each country will develop its own national framework, and it is the national framework that most directly affects study programmes.
 - d. The Rome Communiqué (2020) states that “Flexible and open learning paths, part of the original inspiration for the Bologna Process, are important aspects of student-centred learning and are in increasing demand in our societies. In addition to full degree programmes, many higher education institutions offer or plan to offer smaller units of learning, which enable learners to develop or update their cultural, professional, and transversal skills and competences at various stages in their lives.” The ministers ask the Bologna Follow up Group to explore how and to what extent these smaller, flexible units, including those leading to micro credentials, can be defined, developed, implemented, and recognised by the institutions using EHEA tools. Further, the ministers will “ensure automatic recognition of academic qualifications and periods of study within the EHEA so that students, staff and graduates are able to move freely to study, teach and do research. We will make the necessary legislative changes to guarantee automatic recognition at system level for qualifications delivered in EHEA countries where quality assurance operates in compliance with the ESG and where a fully operational national qualifications framework has been established.”
- (3) The European Approach to Micro-Credentials Final Report (2020) will allow higher education institutions to offer such courses on a larger scale and in a comparable manner throughout Europe, ensuring agreed quality standards, and facilitating their recognition and portability across the EU.
- (4) ECIU White Paper on Micro-Credentials (2021) sets out principles for flexible learning where ECIU learning opportunities are part of a partnership between learners and European universities where labour market and societal challenges are also part of the given offerings.

Appendix II

Signatures

At the Kaunas Board meeting, the ECIU University Board approved on 8 June 2022 the ECIU Recognition Accord.

Members of the ECIU have duly signed by the undersigned authorised representatives in separate signature pages:

- **Aalborg Universitet**
- **Dublin City University**
- **Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Toulouse**
- **Kauno Technologijos Universitetas**
- **Linköpings Universitet**
- **Politechnika Łódzka**
- **Tampereen Korkeakoulusaatio SR**
- **Technische Universität Hamburg**
- **Universidade de Aveiro**
- **Università degli Studi di Trento**
- **Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona**
- **Universiteit Twente**
- **Universitetet i Stavanger**