

# CARDS 2002

**Higher Education Mobility:**

*Diploma Recognition Policy and  
Legislation*

**Qualification Framework,  
level descriptors**

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# Definitions

- **Level:** indication of the standard of difficulty of the work that a student will undertake in order to achieve the credit for the learning
- **Level descriptors:** description of what the **learner** is expected to achieve at the end of a **learning experience**
- **Aim:** indicate the general direction/orientation of a programme (intentions of the teacher; management of the learning)
- **Learning outcome:** statements what the learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do at the end ...



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# Definitions

- **Assessment criteria:** statements that indicate the quality of performance, that will show that the **learner** has reached a particular standard what is reflected in the LOs
- **Assessment method:** the task undertaken by **learners**, the subject of assessment (context for the criteria)
- **Teaching strategy:** the support that needs to be **given to learners** to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes (NB: learning can be achieved without teaching!)



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# Levels and level descriptors

- A system of levels with associated descriptors **provides a structure** to HE
- Different HE systems (Bologna: 3 cycles: 1 undergr + 2 postgr)
- Levels are arranged hierarchically



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# Levels and level descriptors

- Different systems of naming and labeling:
  - *Credit levels*: support credit accumulation and transfer
  - *Qualification descriptors*: relates to the standard of difficulty of work that a learner will have demonstrated in order to gain a a qualification at that level



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# Levels and level descriptors

- Different roles:
  - Credit levels: *teachers*, learners
  - Qualification descriptors: *employers*, learners



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# Levels and level descriptors

- Both types rely on aspects of learning:
  - Complexity of knowledge and understanding
  - Cognitive/practical skills
  - Key and transferable skills
  - Attitudes, ethics

It is a useful exercise **to translate the generic terminology** of level descriptors into that of a subject or discipline (for example: subject benchmark statements (in UK), **subject requirements/standards** (in continental Europe))



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# Levels and level descriptors

- Uses/purposes of level descriptors
  - Characterize qualifications
  - Provide a structure for the design of HE provision
  - Help to maintain standards
  - Provide structure for external articulation or accreditation of external awards
  - Provide means of communication about HE
  - Curriculum design and development
  - A tool for staff development
  - Tool for mapping skills and other curriculum components



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# Levels and level descriptors

- Hints for application:
  - Treat them as **guides not dictates**
  - If there are inappropriate descriptors in generic descriptors ignore them
  - Add descriptors in areas of learning when not in the published descriptors
  - Consider the descriptors in the context of previous and later levels and/or other descriptors at the same level



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# The structure

## Qualifications Framework based on Bologna

### widely agreed generic descriptors

(national level - in agreement with all the stakeholders)

(guidelines may be: Dublin and Helsinki descriptors)

### programme profiles

(common approach to setting out institutional / faculty perspective)

### subject competences

(Tuning; national benchmarks)

(defined by subject/discipline community!)

with an overarching  
**Code of Practice:**  
for the management of  
quality and standards

**'indeks' / Diploma Suppl**  
(individual achievement of students)



# Methodological approaches

different ways to express and measure study programmes

- time-based (years) approaches,
- credit points,
- identification of learning outcomes and competencies,
- qualifications and level indicators,
- subject benchmarks



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# Helsinki descriptors

**common denominators** for 'first cycle' degrees known as bachelor-level degrees

- Bachelor-level degrees are higher education qualifications quantified as between 180 to 240 (ECTS) credits. It normally takes three to four years of full-time study to complete the degree. Bachelor-level degrees play an important role in the lifelong learning paradigm and 'learning to learn' skills should be an essential part of any bachelor-level degree,
- can be taken at either traditional universities or at professionally oriented higher education institutions,
- may have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs,
- specific orientation and learning outcomes explained in the Diploma Supplement,
- should not just be seen as a part of a longer curriculum, as some students may wish to change direction, gain immediate employment or to choose a graduate programme or specialisation



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# Dublin descriptors (JQI)

- development of descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's (BA-MA descriptors) that might be shared within Europe
- each descriptor should indicate an overarching summary of the outcomes of a whole programme of study
- the descriptor should be concerned with the totality of the study, and a student's abilities and attributes that have resulted in the award of the qualification.
- the descriptor should not be limited to describing merely the outcomes of units of assessment at the level of the qualification
- a shared **qualification descriptor, not a shared level descriptor**
- national, regional and institutional contexts might be a need for the local development of level descriptors
- A single generic descriptor for **all** BA-MA degrees



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# TUNING

- A consortium of more than 100 universities investigated the 'tuning' of higher education curricula at the European level;
- 'Tuning' represents the idea that universities do not look for harmonisation of their degree programmes or any sort of definitive European curricula but simply for points of convergence and common understanding;
- Tuning concentrated on the following discipline areas: Business, Educational Sciences, Geology, History and Mathematics, which form the Inner Circle, and 'synergy groups' including: Physics, Chemistry, Languages, Humanitarian Development, Law, Medicine, Mechanical Engineering and Veterinary Sciences.



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# TUNING -objectives

- Bring about a high level of Europe-wide convergence in Higher Education in the five main subject areas (Business, Educational Sciences, Geology, History and Mathematics) by defining commonly accepted professional and learning outcomes.
- Develop professional profiles and desired learning outcomes / competencies, in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies in the five subject areas.
- Facilitate transparency in the educational structures and to further innovation through communication of experience and identification of good practice.
- Create five European networks that can present examples of good practice, encouraging innovation and quality in the joint reflection and exchange, also for other disciplines.



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# TUNING -objectives

- Develop and exchange information in relation to the development of curricula in these five areas, and develop a model curriculum structure for each area, enhancing the recognition and European integration of diplomas.
- Build bridges between this network of universities and other appropriate qualified bodies in order to produce convergence in the five main subject areas.
- Elaborate a methodology for analysing common elements and areas of specificity and diversity, and how to tune them.
- Associate with other subject areas where a similar process can be incorporated through synergy. Among the areas, where related projects are already underway, are Languages, Humanitarian Development, Chemistry, Law and Physics.
- Act in a co-ordinated manner with all the actors involved in the process of tuning of educational structures (Ministries, Conferences of Rectors and Universities).



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# Common reference points

- Consulting European employers and graduate employees on the role and significance of 'general competences' – skills common to any degree course
- Exploring 'subject specific' competences – knowledge and skills - shared by courses in the same discipline
- Refining the European Credit Transfer Systems (ECTS) into a pan European credit accumulation framework based on learning outcomes
- Beginning to explore the complex relationship between teaching, learning and assessment.



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# TUNING

## first cycle general LO

- show familiarity with the foundation and history of his/her major (discipline);
- communicate obtained basic knowledge in a coherent way;
- place new information and interpretation in its context;
- show understanding of the overall structure of the discipline and the connection between its sub disciplines;
- show understanding and implement the methods of critical analyses and development of theories;
- implement discipline related methods and techniques accurately;
- show understanding of the quality of discipline related research;
- show understanding of experimental and observational testing of scientific theories.



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# TUNING

## second cycle general LO

- have a good command of a specialised field within the discipline at an advanced level. This means in practice being acquainted with the newest theories, interpretations, methods and techniques;
- be able to follow critically and interpret the newest development in theory and practice;
- have sufficient competence in the techniques of independent research and be able to interpret the results at an advanced level;
- be able to make an original, albeit limited, contribution within the canons of the discipline, e.g. final thesis;
- show originality and creativity with regard to the handling of the discipline;
- have developed competence at a professional level.



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# TUNING

credit accumulation – course type descriptors

## Levels

- **Basic level course** (meant to give an introduction in a subject);
- **Intermediate level course** (intended to deepen basic knowledge);
- **Advanced level course** (intended to further strengthening of expertise);
- **Specialised level course** (meant to build up knowledge and experience in a special field or discipline).



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# TUNING

credit accumulation – course type descriptors

## Types

- **C**ore course (part of the core of a programme of studies);
- **R**elated course (supporting course for the core);
- **M**inor course (optional course or subsidiary course).



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