

# DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT REVISION

## FINAL REPORT



**WORK PLAN 2015-2018**



# **DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT REVISION**

## **FINAL REPORT**

**Advisory Group 4**



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# Introduction

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## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a transparency instrument developed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO-CEPES between 1996 and 1998.

The DS forms an integral part of three important initiatives in the field of higher education internationalisation and of the recognition of qualifications across borders: the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Bologna Process, and Europass. The first of the three, the Lisbon Recognition Convention (Article IX.3), calls on signatory countries to promote the Diploma Supplement or any equivalent document through national information centres or otherwise. Second, the implementation of the DS is one of the criteria used to measure the Bologna Process's progression in terms of qualification transparency. Third, the DS is one of five Europass transparency tools promoted by the European Commission.

The DS is a document attached to a higher education diploma. It gives a detailed description of its holder's learning outcomes, and the nature, level, context, content and status of individual study components. It includes several pieces of information: the name of the holder of the Supplement, the qualification and its level and function, the contents and achieved results, certification of the Supplement, information on the national higher education system under which the Supplement was issued, and other relevant information. It is free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition.

The DS helps higher education institutions, employers, recognition authorities and other stakeholders more easily understand graduates' skills and competences. In this way, the DS aims to promote transparency and recognition in order to facilitate mobility, access to lifelong learning opportunities, and graduate employability. It therefore represents a response to the twin challenges of both higher education and labour market internationalisation.

The DS already has a long history as it was one of the main subjects in all Ministerial conferences since 1997 (as seen in the annex V).

## **MANDATE OF THE AG**

The Advisory Group on the Revision of the Diploma Supplement was mandated to support the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO in reviewing the Diploma Supplement, in cooperation with stakeholders. A proposal was expected to be delivered to the BFUG by 2017.

The main tasks set out for the Advisory Board included:

- to develop a proposal for a revised version of the Diploma Supplement;
- to consult with external stakeholders;

- to ensure it reflects the recent developments in higher education;
- to take into account the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide;
- to base it more closely on Learning Outcomes, increasing its usefulness in recognition procedures;
- to ensure a close cooperation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO;
- to reflect on the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement;
- to ensure its coherence between a review of the Diploma Supplement and the possible development of a "Doctoral Supplement" within the European Research Area;

In order to reflect the diversity of the EHEA, all Bologna countries, the European Commission, the Consultative members and the BFUG Secretariat were invited to participate in the Advisory Group activities. Altogether, 29 representatives of the BFUG members and other organizations were appointed as AG4 members, attended the group meetings and contributed to its work. In particular, the members representing the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO ensured a close cooperation with the respective organizations.

The full list of members is provided in ANNEX IV.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Advisory group was tasked by the BFUG to develop a proposal for a revised version of the Diploma Supplement in consultation with external stakeholders. To this aim the group had six meetings over the course of 2 years where all the changes have been proposed, discussed and adopted. The changes were made based on:

- Reports regarding the implementation of the Diploma Supplement (The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report, the 2012-2015 Ad-hoc Third Cycle WG). Answers from a questionnaire filled by all the AG4 members regarding the issues that need to be taken into consideration.
- Survey done by the European Commission within the ENIC-NARIC networks and the National Europass Centres for the Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level.
- The reports made by the representatives of students, HEIs and employers regarding their view on the implementation status of the Diploma Supplement and needed changes.
- The members inputs based on their experience.
- Good practice examples.
- Feedback received from the BFUG Board.

# I. Main issues discussed by the group

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## IMPLEMENTATION

### General findings regarding the implementation

**By looking at the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation report**, an improvement can be seen regarding the implementation of the Diploma Supplement compared with 2012. However, in 2015, two thirds of countries have failed to fulfil all the requirements – that the Diploma Supplement should be issued to every graduate, automatically, in a widely spoken European language and issued free of charge. Insufficient incentives and lack of political will were reported to be the main factors for not fulfilling the requirements to issue a Diploma Supplement to every graduate, automatically, in a widely spoken European language, and free of charge.

The main issue in implementation:

- Issuing Diploma Supplement automatically: only 31 higher education systems (26 in 2012) do so.
  - All countries issue Diploma Supplements in a widely spoken European language, but in some cases only on request.
  - Most countries choose English as the main non-national language for the DS.
  - While in 2012 five countries issued Diploma Supplements for a fee, the number is now three.
  - The issuing of the Diploma Supplement in the third cycle is less widespread than in the first and second cycles, but still two thirds of the countries issue the DS to all or some third cycle graduates which was not the case in previous periods.
  - 14 higher education systems (against 7 in 2012) report that they have launched studies to monitor how higher education institutions use the Diploma Supplement. The bodies carrying out such monitoring vary widely. It may be the ministry, the National Board of Education, an inspectorate, the quality assurance agency, the Rectors' Conference, or a Higher Education International Unit.
  - Checking how employers use the Diploma Supplement is rare and only four countries survey employers on this question.
- The Diploma Supplement **template proved to be relevant** for HEIs across EHEA. The majority of surveyed HEIs that issued a document providing a description of the acquired competences, completed studies, their nature, level, context and content along with a higher education diploma, did so following the Diploma Supplement template.

- There was a **lack of monitoring** on DS use and satisfaction at both national and international levels across the EHEA. Lack of direct feedback mechanisms were limiting the information that HEIs possessed about the potential usefulness of the DS to their students. Moreover, insufficient monitoring did not allow governments to assess the national level measures taken to enhance DS awareness and implementation.
- Admission officers evaluated the DS to be **one of the most valuable tools for qualification recognition**, but its application for this purpose was still relatively low. **High satisfaction and low uptake indicated great potential to enhance the usage** of DS among HEIs for admissions procedures.
- Even though the employers' survey carried out in the context of this study indicated that the documents outlining student achievement records (knowledge and skills of the holder, a description of the completed studies, their nature, level, context and content) were frequently used, the frequency of use of the Diploma Supplement and satisfaction of employers differed significantly among individual respondents.

The group agreed that the major issue that hinders the implementation of the Diploma Supplement is an **absence of common understanding**, among the users and the labour market stakeholders, on what exactly the Diploma Supplement is and what benefits it could provide to its holders. Moreover, there is still a lack of common understanding among the users, on how to fill out the current template. The kind of information provided under the different points still shows great variation.

The study on DS implementation formulated a number of findings on possibilities to **strengthen DS implementation**:

- Issuing institutions often had **different understandings of the requirements for filling out the DS**, which resulted in inconsistently presented graduate data (i.e. content, structure and layout) and **diminished comparability of information** provided in the document.
- Diploma Supplement users often noticed that the DS lacked additional information that would describe **internships, mobility periods, or extraordinary achievements**. Completing such custom entries would require a significant amount of manual work. Moreover, there was no specific section for extracurricular achievements within the DS template.
- **The length and complexity of the DS was evaluated in a contradictory fashion** by different types of stakeholders. Some employers expected more information about learning outcomes, and noted that the descriptions of educational systems were irrelevant. Meanwhile, HEI representatives expected more information about the content of curricula, while ENIC-NARIC representatives expressed a need for a more comprehensive description of educational systems.
- The current format and paper medium of the DS could not provide the **flexibility** needed to simultaneously meet the very diverse needs and expectations of different stakeholder groups. For the situation to change, the future DS template would need to become **more flexible** and **accessible in digital as well as analogue format**.

**The Diploma Supplement was not well-known across all of its intended target groups.** The level of use of the DS may have been higher if employers had received sufficient information on the Diploma Supplement's existence, benefits and applicability.

The AG discussed the purpose and use of the DS in order to identify the information it should provide, and what revision may be needed. This was done by acknowledging the fact that **the DS template should not vary from one country to another within the EHEA** since any variation would weaken the international status and value of the Diploma Supplement. Each country is responsible for the national implementation of the standard template, although some variations in the national layout may be accepted.

## QUALITY OF DS

The diploma supplement forms an important part of the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is an important tool for graduates to ensure that their degrees are recognized by higher education institutions, public authorities and employers in their home countries and abroad. The diploma supplement should build on and include the use of common transparency tools such as learning outcomes, ECTS and how the degrees correspond to the national qualification framework(s) and external national quality assurance and/or accreditation. Analysing current situation it results that the DS is not always filled in a proper way, thus giving not the same correct information to the end user of it. The AG4 group agreed that for this purpose some changes have been made in the DS and the explanatory notes were revised in order to be updated and to give consistent information on how to fill in the DS.

### Learning outcomes

The importance of presenting learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement is apparent and the usefulness of learning outcomes was brought up in the surveys and reports discussed by the group. According to the *“Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation<sup>1</sup> at European level”* (2017) the description of learning outcomes in the DS was of a significant importance to the employers and it also provided for the added value of the Diploma Supplement over alternative documents. Confederation of German Employer's Associations called for attention to better presentation of learning outcomes. ESU's report in 2015 *“Bologna with Students' Eyes”* also underlined the importance of learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement and pointed out that learning outcomes were not always included into the DS nor did they represent the individual learning outcomes of graduates.

From the Diploma Supplement examples studied by the working group it was apparent, that learning outcomes were not always presented in the Diploma Supplement and when they were, the level of detail and/or personification varied from generic learning outcomes for the study program, to actual personal learning outcomes of the graduate.

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<sup>1</sup> *“Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level”* (2017) by PPMI <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1ae19aac-6a9a-11e7-b2f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-32160429>

The working group agreed with the importance of presenting achieved learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplements and on the need of e.g. better instructions in the DS explanatory notes to support HEIs.

## Presentation of data and additional information

The group discussed extensively the way of the data presentation and agreed to make some changes. These should help to fill in relevant data. The explanatory notes describe clearly what the different sections in the template stand for, what kind of information should or should not be provided, etc.

Regarding the field “additional information” the group agreed that they could be included in the DS if certified by the institution and if relevant to the purpose of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification. E.g. a mobility period abroad, a work placement, a voluntary activity etc. for which the student has not received credits or recognition, but which nonetheless is deemed to contribute to the learning outcomes defined for the qualification.

## STUDENTS, HEIS, EMPLOYERS AND THE DS

The working group collected information on the perspective of students, HEIs and employers on the DS, their awareness and ownership of the document. This was done through previous studies conducted and reports compiled, as well as making use of new studies conducted whilst the working groups’ work was on-going.

### Students and the DS

European Students Union (ESU) made a report in 2015 “Bologna with Students’ Eyes” and it showed that many countries appear to issue the Diploma Supplement in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, nevertheless there was still a significant number of countries that did not fulfil the criteria of automatically awarding diploma supplements free of charge to the graduates. Furthermore, the report also reminded that the DS has an important role in the improved employability of graduates.

The recent *“Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level”* further showed that the awareness of the DS and its potential uses is also quite limited among students and graduates. A few interviewed HEI representatives affirmed that students did not even know about the existence of the DS until they graduated. The Graduate survey data within the study indicated that while many of the respondents reported that they had received detailed information about the DS, a large share of students/alumni could not even answer the question. Although this data cannot tell us about how well students were actually informed about the DS, it does suggest that, at the institutional level, there is room for improvement in respect to raising students’ awareness about the usability of additional student The *“Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level”* also revealed that the most common use of the DS by the graduates was related to job applications, which supports the ESU report in signifying the importance of the DS for enhancing employability. The document was either sent with, or consulted to, fill in a CV, cover letter or professional profile by nearly half of the respondents to the study.

## Higher education institutions and the DS

The European University' Association (EUA) has been following the development of the European Higher Education Area and the different Bologna tools through the EUA Trends reports (2001 – 2018) and different European projects. The MAUNIMO report (2012): *Mobility: Closing the gap between policy and practice*, Outcome report of the project “Mapping University Mobility of Staff and students” showed that: “Despite many years of promoting the implementation of ECTS, learning agreements and the Diploma Supplement at higher education institutions in Europe, mobility and transparency tools were still not universally familiar.” The report also found out that: “MAUNIMO coordinators who thought that resources such as the ECTS or Diploma Supplement were widely known and fully accepted were surprised by the results, which often demonstrated that some members of the academic community were not aware of them and perhaps not consistently applying them.”

Furthermore, the report discovered that: “According to the universities that took part in MAUNIMO, mobility approaches or strategies may have been developed but there is little knowledge of their impact. This may be because they remain unknown at the institution concerned or because not enough resources have been invested in communicating or implementing them.”

Other stakeholder reports and findings show that the situation remains very much the same. For example ESU's report “Bologna with Students' Eyes” showed that in 2015 not all HEIs met with the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention:

- only 31 out of 38 countries reported of existing legislation regarding the Diploma Supplement
- 27 out of 38 countries issue the Diploma Supplement automatically and 8 countries issue it only by request
- The Diploma Supplement is not issued free of charge in all countries

The EUA Trends 2015 report: *Learning and Teaching in European Universities* found that awareness of the tools that facilitate mobility are on the rise within institutions. The report pointed out that a combination of actions, such as defining learning outcomes, improving the use of ECTS, ensuring the quality of Diploma Supplements and their international understanding would contribute to increased mobility.

The (2017) “Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level” found that more than 80% of the surveyed HEIs issued followed the template of CoE/UNESCO/Europass Diploma Supplement, with only a few using alternative documents for the purpose.

## Employers and the DS

The Diploma Supplement plays an important role in enhancing the employability of the graduates; it provides relevant information about the graduate's academic achievements to the employers. The role of the DS in the world of work was first recognized already in the Prague Communiqué in 2001. For example, according to the “Study to support the revision

of the Diploma Supplement and analyses the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level” graduates use the DS actively for employment purposes. However, there is very little actual surveys on the views of employers about the Diploma Supplement.

Confederation of German Employers’ Associations/Member of Business Europe presented the views of employers to the working group in 2016. The DS is a useful instrument for assessing and comparing academic degrees from different countries. It can also contribute to the increased mobility of professionals who intend to work in another country within the European Higher Education Area.

Confederation called for better Diploma Supplements with attention to better presentation of information and more coherent use of the common template, which would contribute to the DS being more useful to the employers.

According to the “Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyses the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level” (2017), the level of use of the DS among employers has been scarcely evaluated in the EHEA, with monitoring carried out only in Germany, France, Romania and Montenegro. The ENIC-NARIC in France collected data that showed it had not been popular among national employers in 2014. In contrast, a high share of employers in Germany in 2011 considered the DS as important (70%), with almost 50% perceiving the document as a decisive criterion in the candidate selection process<sup>2</sup>.

Stakeholders in Germany noted that the DS had helped make acquired competences more transparent<sup>3</sup>. Even though in most cases the expectations for increased transparency attributable to the Diploma Supplement were higher than the actual experience, it was nevertheless considered to be a very beneficial tool by more than two thirds of surveyed employers. The description of learning outcomes in the DS had been the main source from which German employers obtained information about the qualifications of the candidate according to a study conducted in 2007<sup>4</sup>. This gives the Diploma Supplement an advantage over alternative documents in recognition and employment.

According to the survey of employers done within the “Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level” (2017), around 9 of 10 surveyed persons working in HR/recruitment had at some point used the Diploma Supplement or its alternatives to acquire information about job candidates. More than half of the surveyed enterprises asked for such documents from candidates often or very often (see graph below).

The same survey among employers revealed that there were three main reasons why employers did not use the tool: lack of relevance of information presented in the DS for recruitment (by far the most important reason), lack of awareness about the DS, and lack of understanding of its purpose.

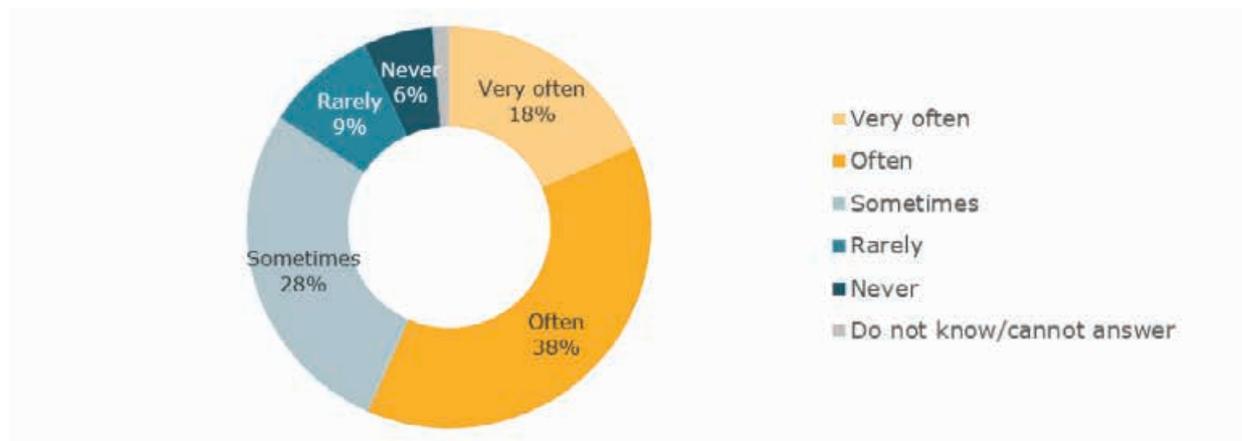
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<sup>2</sup> DAAD, 2011. Bachelor und Master auf dem Arbeitsmarkt: Die Sicht deutscher Unternehmen auf Auslandserfahrungen und Qualifikationen. Available at: <https://eu.daad.de/medien/eu/publikationen/bologna/bachelor-master-publikation.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> DAAD, 2007. Bachelor, Master und Auslandserfahrungen: Erwartungen und Erfahrungen deutscher Unternehmen. Available at: [http://www.iwconsult.de/imperia/md/images/iwconsult/pdf/download/akzeptanz\\_bachelor\\_master.pdf](http://www.iwconsult.de/imperia/md/images/iwconsult/pdf/download/akzeptanz_bachelor_master.pdf)

Figure 1. How often do employers use the DS to acquire information on candidates?



Source: Employers survey, PPMI, 2017

## FORMAT AND DIGITALISATION OF DS

The Group's work on this issue was based on the recent **“Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level”** that had analysed the feasibility of the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement and provided some useful indications and scenarios.

Many higher education institutions find the DS an administrative challenge. The target groups of the document often find it too long and yet lacking details on the content most relevant to them. Digitalisation of the DS would make the administration of the document easier, and also allow for a document that, through modularity or other solutions, enables the target groups to get easier access to the information which is most relevant to them. Furthermore, digitalisation of the DS opens up new possibilities of using the document more efficiently and flexibly in providing information on the academic achievements of the individual.

The main findings on the feasibility of digitalisation are:

- Most of the interviewed **stakeholders were in favour of the** digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement. The **digitalisation effort could potentially close the existing DS implementation gaps** and provide further benefits to its users.
- The **costs** of introducing the **digital Diploma Supplement were not that high**, however, the **perception of costs** made some HEIs reluctant. This could be resolved by providing **a clear explanation of the costs** involved and better dissemination efforts of digital practices.
- The **employers** largely agreed that digitalisation of the DS **could reduce recruitment process costs**. Likewise, many **HEI and ENIC-NARIC** representatives either **expected or confirmed** that digitalisation of the DS **would aid faster accreditation and validation**.
- Digital technologies allow for more varied security measures, which would ensure a **higher security standard for student data** than the paper format. However, in order to make the use of the DS as convenient as possible, security measures should take into account related services such as user **authentication options**.

- A digital DS would allow for a **more flexible format of the document**. More flexibility would allow issues related to the current **length and formatting** of the DS to be addressed, and accommodate **more customized information**. Digitalisation also opens up the opportunity for **further integration of the document with other related services**.

Currently only in a few cases the DS is issued digitally, but there are examples of it that can be useful for other HEIs. There are also several different approaches to digitalisation for HEIs to consider; from issuing a simple standalone certified electronic document to user-oriented services to open digital credentials. This means that HEIs can opt for different approaches most suitable to them, and also advance step by step in the digitalisation of the DS, possibly alongside with other digitalisation processes of the institution. The DS study provides a detailed overview on these.

The group agreed that the first steps towards digitalisation are not complex or costly – while digitalisation, when really invested into, can bring a lot more benefits to the institutions and individuals alike. **The conclusion was to encourage HEIs to adopt suitable digitalisation procedures for issuing the Diploma Supplement.**

## THE DOCTORAL SUPPLEMENT

One of the tasks set up in the terms of reference was ensuring coherence between the reviewed Diploma Supplement and the possible development of a “**Doctoral Supplement**” within the European Research Area (ERA). As the “doctoral supplement” has not been yet developed within the ERA this task has not been addressed. Nevertheless, the group concluded that, the current and the revised format of the diploma supplement can be used by countries that decide to do so for the doctoral level.

## ROLE OF DS FOR JOINT DEGREES

The Diploma supplement plays an important role in relation to joint degrees and transnational or cross border higher education provision. In order to facilitate recognition of joint degrees graduates should be provided with a diploma supplement where ECTS or other types of credits which are award based on learning outcomes have to be part of. For this purpose the AG4 group agreed that a diploma supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree, and it should clearly indicate at which institutions and/or in which study programmes the different parts of the degree have been earned. Considering also that Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee set out recommendations on the recognition of Joint Degrees on 29 February 2016 the respective foot note have been updated with the respective link. The AG4 group agreed also to add a definition on Joint degrees and to adopt for this purpose the definition from the European Commission concerning joint degrees as follows:

“Joint degree: A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.”

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS: NEW TEMPLATE AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

The working group established that there is no need to apply major changes to the current template. The current template serves the needs of the users well, when it is used correctly and all the relevant information is filled-in. Furthermore, the working group acknowledged that in many countries the Diploma Supplement is only recently implemented in full and a major change of template would not be feasible at this stage.

The working group proposes a moderate number of changes to the template that are clarifying in their nature with the aim of contributing to the improved filling-in of the Diploma Supplement template by the higher education institutions. Furthermore, clarifications and better information are proposed to the Diploma Supplement explanatory notes to support and assist higher education institutions.

The group agreed that the level of the qualification has to indicate the specific National Qualifications Framework, and the corresponding level in the two main overarching Qualifications Frameworks: QF-EHEA and/or EQF, as the most largely used qualification classification. ISCED level was not foreseen anymore considering that it is mostly a statistical framework than a qualification framework.

### Summary of changes proposed to DS template

DS Template	Current	Proposed
2.1	Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred	Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred (in original language)
<b>Heading 3</b>	Information on the Level of the Qualification	Information on the Level and Duration of the Qualification
3.1	Level of qualification	Level of the qualification
3.2	Official length of programme	Official duration of programme in credits and/or years
<b>Heading 4</b>	Information on the Contents and Results Gained	Information on the Programme Completed and the Results obtained
4.2	Programme requirements	Programme Learning Outcomes
4.3	Programme details: (e.g. modules or units studied), and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained:	Programme details, individual credits gained and grades/marks obtained
4.4	Grading schemes and, if available, grade distribution guidance	Grading system and, if available, grade distribution table
5.2	Professional status	Access to a regulated profession (if applicable):

The group also acknowledged that the final and formal adoption of the revised Diploma Supplement template is pending on the adoption by CoE and UNESCO in the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee meeting in 2019 as well as within the European Commission framework.

Summary changes proposed for the DS guidelines (renamed: explanatory notes)

- **Changes to the structure**
  - In order to better understand the how the DS should be filled in and used, the group agreed that the explanatory notes should start with the “**Principles and general guidelines for those producing supplements**”. This would underline the importance of these issues.
  - The text has been updated and revised in order to make it shorter, easy to read and understand.
- **Outline structure for the diploma supplement**
  - The introductory paragraphs were updated emphasizing the purpose of the DS.
  - The headings were modified in order to be the same as in the revised template.
- **Diploma supplement explanatory notes**
  - The introductory paragraphs of this section were moved to the beginning of the document in the Principles and general Guidelines for consistency reasons.
  - Introductory paragraphs underling the purpose of each section (headings) were added.
  - For each explanatory note the heading name was added in order to make the document easy to read;
  - Changes were made to the language in order to make the document easy to read.
- **Glossary**
  - New terms were added in the glossary section and some definitions were updated.

The specific changes made to the explanatory notes are showed with track changes in annex VI.

## II. Monitoring

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The Working Group identified a need for a monitoring of the implementation but also the content and quality of the Diploma Supplements. There are various ways to achieve this. Monitoring supports the individual higher education institutions to implement and develop their Diploma Supplements and provides for the sometimes needed incentive to invest into this work.

## III. Recommendations

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### EARLY CONCLUSIONS

Based on the major role played by learning outcomes in recognition procedures and job recruitment, the consensus was that **the template of the Diploma Supplement should include a specific section requiring a clear statement of the achieved learning outcomes by the student, in an easily readable format.**

The Group also agreed that the **current Diploma Supplement template provides the opportunity to include information on internships and mobility experiences, as well as reference to extracurricular learning achievements and the recognition of prior learning.**

Finally, the Group agreed that it would be advisable **to limit the revision of the template to a few necessary changes and rather work on the explanatory notes for filling out the template**, in order to improve the quality of the information provided. It was agreed that such information should be clear, useful and concise. The DS explanatory notes should take into account the recent developments in the EHEA, as well as the indications contained in the recently revised ECTS Users' Guide.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BFUG

- Acknowledge the DS as an essential tool for recognition, mobility and employability.
- Support implementation to reach full potential in line with student centred learning by recommending HEIs to revisit the DS and its implications
- The BFUG should acknowledge the work done by the AG4 and should support the proposed changes to the DS template and explanatory notes as this document is a common tool shared by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO. The revised template will need to be adopted in both the Council of Europe/ UNESCO and EU frameworks, and it is important that identical versions be adopted in both frameworks. However, the group took note of the fact that the 3 organisations (Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO) cannot guarantee at this stage that the suggested modifications will exactly be taken over
- The BFUG should acknowledge the initiative of the European Commission with the Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level.

## AG4 PROPOSALS FOR THE PARIS MINISTERIAL COMMUNIQUE

The ministers commit to implement the revised DS template and explanatory notes proposed by the BFUG

**Proposed text** “(..) call upon the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO to adopt the proposed updated DS template and explanatory notes.”

The ministers agree to monitor the implementation of the revised DS at the national and institutional level.

**Proposed text** “(..)We encourage the higher education and training community, with the Commission, UNESCO and Council of Europe, to embark on the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement, with a commitment by higher education institutions to pursue further student data exchange in a secure, machine-readable format, in line with data protection legislation, in order to promote further student mobility.”

The ministers acknowledge that the digitalisation of the DS is the way forward towards enhancing its objectives and that technical solutions for this exist

**Proposed text** “(..) encourage HEIs to embark on the digitalisation of DS and student data exchange, with a commitment to collect student data in a secure, machine-readable format, in line with data protection legislation.”

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GROUP

1. EHEA countries and HEIs should promote the new template and its explanatory notes after they are adopted by the responsible bodies.
2. Countries should monitor the implementation of the DS at the national and institutional level.
3. Quality assurance agencies should take into account issuing the new DS in the accreditation process
4. Issuing a digital DS in the appropriate format should be encouraged.
5. The development of national guidelines regarding the use of the DS should be encouraged.
6. *Finally, the group agrees with the recommendations made in the “Study on the Diploma Supplement as seen by its users”<sup>5</sup>:*
  - **Taking into account the problems regarding the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in terms of content, structure and layout, “HEIs should stick to the DS model”**
  - **A common set of expressions** for the different categories is helpful for the readability and comparability
  - **Technical terms** that are only common in a specific national system or even at specific universities, as well as unusual abbreviations, **should be avoided**.
  - **Brief and clear information should be provided in the form of lists, tables, short texts**
  - **References to other documents should be avoided** as the information necessary for the DS users has to be given in the DS
  - DS should be **included in the Quality Assurance** work and processes of the HEI

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5 [www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Diploma-Supplement-Study\\_Edit-MS.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Diploma-Supplement-Study_Edit-MS.pdf)

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# I. THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT TEMPLATE

## Diploma supplement

<b>1. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE HOLDER OF THE QUALIFICATION</b>	
1.1 Last name(s) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	1.2 First name(s) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
1.3 Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy) <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	1.4 Student identification number or code (if available) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
<b>2. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE QUALIFICATION</b>	
2.1 Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred (in original language) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	2.2 Main field(s) of study for the qualification <input style="width: 90%; height: 60px;" type="text"/>
2.3 Name and status of awarding Institution (in original language) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	2.4 Language(s) of instruction/examination <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
2.5 Name and status of institution (if different from 2.3) administering studies (in original language) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	2.6 <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
<b>3. INFORMATION ON THE LEVEL AND DURATION OF THE QUALIFICATION</b>	
3.1 Level of the qualification <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	3.2 Official duration of programme in credits and/or years <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
3.3 Access requirements(s) <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	
<b>4. INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME COMPLETED AND THE RESULTS OBTAINED</b>	
4.1 Mode of study <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	4.2 Programme learning outcomes <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
4.3 Programme details, individual credits gained and grades/marks obtained <input style="width: 90%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	
4.4 Grading system and, if available, grade distribution table <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (in original language) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
<b>5. INFORMATION ON THE FUNCTION OF THE QUALIFICATION</b>	
5.1 Access to further study <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	5.2 Access to a regulated profession (if applicable) <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>

**6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Additional information	Further information sources
6.1 <input type="text"/>	6.2 <input type="text"/>

**7. CERTIFICATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT**

Date	Signature
7.1 <input type="text"/>	7.2 <input type="text"/>
Capacity	Official stamp or seal
7.3 <input type="text"/>	7.4 <input type="text"/>

**8. INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

## II. THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT EXPLANATORY NOTES

### Diploma supplement

#### I. Principles and general guidelines for those producing supplements

The diploma supplement forms an important part of the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is an important tool for graduates to ensure that their degrees are recognised by higher education institutions, public authorities and employers in their home countries and abroad. The diploma supplement should build on and include the use of common transparency tools such as learning outcomes, ECTS and how the degrees correspond to the national qualification framework(s) and external national quality assurance and/or accreditation.

The Diploma Supplement is jointly developed by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO and an updated version was adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2007. Since the introduction of the Bologna Process in 1999 it has been adopted in the national legislations of the participating countries, and Ministers committed themselves to issuing it to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005. The Diploma Supplement was also incorporated in the Europass Framework established by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers in 2004<sup>6</sup>. This revised version was endorsed by the EHEA Ministers in Paris in 2018.

The Diploma Supplement plays a particularly important role in relation to joint degrees<sup>7</sup> and transnational or crossborder higher education provision. A Diploma Supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree, and it should clearly indicate at which institutions and/or in which study programmes the different parts of the degree have been earned.

The Diploma Supplement is intended to facilitate the implementation of the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, Lisbon 1997.

#### Founding Principles

The Diploma Supplement is based on the following founding principles that respect national and international academic autonomy. These principles also give some further explanation of the purpose and nature of the new version.

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6 See the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint degrees, adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in Paris on 29 February 2016 available at [www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Revised\\_Recommendation\\_on\\_the\\_Recognition\\_of\\_Joint\\_Degrees\\_2016.pdf](http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Revised_Recommendation_on_the_Recognition_of_Joint_Degrees_2016.pdf)

7 See the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Joint Degrees, adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2001 and revised by the Committee in 2007, available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice\\_EN.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp#TopOfPage), and the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education adopted in autumn 2005 in the framework of both Organizations, available at [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/51/35779480.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/51/35779480.pdf).  
[www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Downloads/MiscDocs/EuropassDecision/navigate.action](http://www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Downloads/MiscDocs/EuropassDecision/navigate.action) Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass).

The Diploma Supplement is:

- a flexible, non-prescriptive tool, capable of adaptation to local needs;
- a device that has national and international applications;
- a system to aid recognition for academic and professional purposes;
- an approach that specifically excludes any claims and value-judgements concerning recognition by providing sufficient objective information;
- a tool to focus on the outcomes of the learning that has taken place;
- an addition to the original credential, not a substitute of it.

### **General Guidelines**

It is strongly recommended that supplements should conform with the following:

- The brief explanatory note (in the box at the head of the sample supplement) should be reproduced as part of each completed Diploma Supplement.
- Institutions should follow the structure and sequence of information as provided in the template. Avoid information overload and present information as concisely as possible.
- In combination with the credential itself, the supplement should provide sufficient information to enable the reader to make an assessment about the qualification. However, it should be clear that it is not designed to replace a curriculum vitae.
- Supplements should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition.
- The production of supplements is best done centrally and not devolved to different parts of academic institutions.
- Institutions should take appropriate action to minimise the possibility of forgery and misrepresentation of their supplements.
- Information on the higher education system (section eight) should be kept to a two-page maximum. Where possible, information should include diagrams, charts and reference to the national qualifications framework. This section could be produced for each country with the help of national ENICs/NARICs (national information centres), Ministries and Rectors' Conferences. It is particularly important that section eight of the supplement describe the national higher education structure in force at the time the qualification was awarded.
- The Supplement should be issued automatically at the time the qualification is completed, free of charge and in a widely spoken language. Additionally, Supplements may be produced in the language(s) institutions think appropriate.
- The original language should be used where indicated in the Guidelines. The glossary of terms associated with the supplement has been specifically produced to overcome linguistic confusions.

## II. Outline structure for the diploma supplement

The purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international “transparency” and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It is free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

- Information identifying the holder of the qualification
  - Last name(s):
  - First name(s):
  - Date of birth (day/month/year):
  - Student identification number or code (if available):
- Information identifying the qualification
  - Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred (in original language):
  - Main field(s) of study for the qualification:
  - Name and status of awarding institution (in original language):
  - Name and status of institution (if different from 2.3) administering studies (in original language):
  - Language(s) of instruction/examination:
- Information on the level and duration of the qualification
  - Level of the qualification:
  - Official duration of programme in credits and/or years:
  - Access requirements(s)
- Information on the programme completed and the results obtained
  - Mode of study:
  - Programme learning outcomes:
  - Programme details, individual credits gained and grades/marks obtained:  
(if this information is available in an official transcript this should be used here)
  - Grading system and, if available, grade distribution table:
  - Overall classification of the qualification (in original language):
- Information on the function of the qualification
  - Access to further study:
  - Access to a regulated profession (if applicable)
- Additional information
  - Additional information:
  - Further information sources:
- Certification of the supplement
  - Date:
  - Signature:
  - Capacity:
  - Official stamp or seal:
- Information on the national higher education system

(N.B. Institutions who intend to issue Diploma Supplements should refer to the explanatory notes that explain how to complete them.)

### III. Diploma supplement explanatory notes

The numbers below refer to the numbered sections in the Diploma Supplement Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why

#### **1 Information identifying the holder of the qualification**

The purpose of this section is to provide the information required to identify clearly the holder of the qualification.

- **1.1 Last name(s):**
- 1.1 Provide the full family or surname(s).
- **1.2 First name(s):**
- 1.2 Include all given/first names.
- **1.3 Date of birth (*day/month/year*):**
- 1.3 Indicate day, month and year of birth.
- **1.4 Student identification number or code (*if available*):**
- 1.4 This should identify the individual as a student enrolled at the institution on a particular programme which is described in the Diploma Supplement, e.g. through the student's personal code in the institution's database. A national or State personal identification number could be included for those countries that have such systems of identification, in accordance with national legislation.

#### **2 Information identifying the qualification**

The purpose of this section is to provide the information required to identify clearly the qualification and the higher education institution(s) awarding it.

- **2.1 Name of qualification and (*if applicable*) title conferred (*in original language*):**
- 2.1 Give the full name of the qualification in the original language(s) as it is styled in the original qualification e.g. *Kandidat nauk, Maîtrise, Diplom*, etc. The original name of the qualifications may be transliterated into the alphabet or writing system used for the language in which the Diploma Supplement is issued (e.g. Latin characters for Supplements issued in English or Cyrillic for Supplements issued in Russian). However, the original name of the qualification in original alphabet should also be provided. Indicate if the award confers any nationally accepted title on the holder and what this title is e.g. *Doctor, Ingénieur* etc. If the qualification is a joint/double degree or it was earned under a transnational or borderless education arrangement, this should be indicated.

- **2.2 Main field(s) of study for the qualification:**
- 2.2 Show only the major field(s) of study (disciplines) that define the main subject area(s) for the qualification e.g. *Politics and History, Human Resource Management, Business Administration, Molecular Biology* etc.
- **2.3 Name and status of awarding institution (in original language):**
- 2.3 Indicate the name of the institution awarding the qualification in the original language. Where a degree is issued jointly by two or more institutions, the names of the institutions issuing the joint degree should be indicated. The status of the institution refers above all to whether it has successfully undergone a quality assurance and/or accreditation exercise or procedure, and this should be clearly indicated. If the responsible QA/Accreditation Agency has been proved to follow the European Standards and Guidelines or similar standards in other continents, e.g. through registration in EQAR and/or membership in ENQA or otherwise, this should be mentioned. It may also be relevant to give the profile of the institution. If the provider is transnational or borderless, this should be clearly noted. As a (fictitious) example, this information could be given in the following form: “[Name of the institution] is a university which has undergone external quality assurance by agency X, that is certified to follow the European Standards and Guidelines [through registration in EQAR and/or membership in ENQA/else], in [name of the country] in 2015 with satisfactory results”.
- **2.4 Name and status of institution (if different from 2.3) administering studies (in original language):**
- 2.4 This refers to the institution which is responsible for the delivery of the programme. This is often, but not always, the same as the institution awarding the qualification (see 2.3 above). Cases are known in which a higher education institution entitles another institution to deliver its programmes and issue its qualifications through a “franchise” or some type of “validation”, “affiliation”, etc. In some cases a branch campus may be located in a different country. If this is the case it should be indicated here. If there is a difference between the awarding institution and the institution delivering the programme leading to the qualification, indicate the status of both, see 2.3 above.
- **2.5 Language(s) of instruction/examination:**
- 2.5 Indicate the language(s) by which the qualification was officially delivered and examined.

### **3 Information on the level and duration of the qualification**

The purpose of this section is to provide the information required to identify clearly the level of the qualification, and describe its duration in years and/or credits.

- **3.1 Level of the qualification:**
- 3.1 Give the precise level of the qualification and its place in the specific national educational structure of awards, and/or in the National Qualifications Framework, if available (cross-referenced to the information in point 8). Reference should also be made to the corresponding level in the two main overarching Qualifications Frameworks: QF-EHEA and/or EQF, e.g., Second cycle QF-EHEA/Level 7 EQF. Include any relevant

information on “level indicators” that are nationally devised and recognised and which relate to the qualification

- **3.2 Official duration of programme in credits and/or years:**

- 3.2 Indicate the total student workload required and/or the official duration of the programme in years of full-time study. The student workload should be described in terms of credits and the credit system used should be indicated. EHEA countries are expected to make reference to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)<sup>8</sup>, e.g. 2 years /120 ECTS credits.

- **3.3 Access requirement(s)**

- 3.3 List the qualification(s) or periods of study required for access to the programme described by this Diploma Supplement (cross-referenced to the information in point 8), e.g. *Matura* (for access to a first degree programme) or *Bachelor Degree* (for access to a second degree programme). This is particularly important when intermediate studies are a prerequisite for the named qualification.

#### **4 Information on the programme completed and the results obtained**

The purpose of this section is to describe in detail what the holder of the qualification has learned in the programme and the level of his/her performance.

- **4.1 Mode of study:**

- 4.1 The mode of study refers to how the programme was undertaken e.g. full-time, part-time, intermittent/sandwich, e-learning, distance, etc.

- **4.2 Programme learning outcomes:**

- 4.2 Indicate the learning outcomes associated with the qualification. Learning outcomes are statements of what the graduate knows, understands and is able to do after completing his/her studies and receiving the qualification (knowledge, skills, competencies). Learning outcomes should be expressed in the present tense, e.g.: “The graduate can analyse consumer behaviour trends and apply them in a given consumer market”. This information is increasingly becoming the key basis on which qualifications are assessed and/or recognized.

- **4.3 Programme details, individual credits gained and grades/marks obtained: (if this information is available in an official transcript this should be used here)**

- 4.3 Indicate the individual units completed in order to obtain the qualification, the credits attached to them and the marks/grades gained. For institutions that issue transcripts of studies, it will be sufficient to include the transcript. Entries should be as complete as possible and in accordance with what is normally recorded at the institution concerned. If the qualification is a joint degree, indicate what parts of the qualification were earned in which partner institution. Similarly, if the programme of study included mandatory/recognized learning activities carried out outside the university such as:

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8 [http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index_en.htm)

a mobility period abroad, a work placement, voluntary work, etc. indicate which components of the qualification were successfully completed in which partner institution/company and duly recognized. This can be done either by including these specific activities directly in the transcript with their original titles, or by linking them in a transparent way with the mentioned activities recognized by the HEI. If the qualification includes a dissertation or thesis, indicate its title (if available). If this section is too long, it can be included in the transcript of records.

- **4.4 Grading system and, if available, grade distribution table:**

- 4.4 Provide information on the grading system and pass marks relating to the qualification, e.g.: marks are out of a possible 100% and the minimum pass mark is 40%. Tremendous variations in grading practices exist within and between different national higher education institutions and countries. In order to provide information on the use of grades in a specific context, a grade distribution table<sup>9</sup> relating to the qualification in question should be included. If more than one grading system is used, e.g.: in the case of joint degrees, information should be provided on all systems used for the qualification in question. If this section is too long, it can be included in the transcript of records.

- **4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (*in original language*):**

- 4.5 If appropriate, indicate the overall classification for the final qualification e.g.: *First Class Honors Degree, Summa Cum Laude, Merit, Avec Distinction, Avec mention* etc. If applicable, a grade distribution table of final grades should be provided.

## **5 Information on the function of the qualification**

The purpose of this section is to illustrate/explain how the qualification may be used for academic or professional purposes.

- **5.1 Access to further study:**

- 5.1 Indicate if, within the country of origin, the qualification normally provides access to further academic and/or professional studies, especially leading to any specific qualifications, or levels of study, e.g.: access to Doctoral studies in the country or institution. If this is the case, specify the grades or standards that have to be obtained to allow progression.

- **5.2 Access to a regulated profession (if applicable)**

- 5.2 Give details of any rights to practise, or professional title, accorded to the holder of the qualification, in accordance with national legislation or requirements by a competent authority. Indicate what specific access, if any, the qualification gives in terms of exercising the profession (e.g.: the qualification allows the holder to practise a regulated profession or to access a further stage of professional certification, such as a state exam or approval by a competent authority).

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<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index_en.htm)

## **6 Additional information**

The purpose of this section is to include any other information which could not be included in the previous sections and is relevant to the purpose of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification.

- **6.1 Additional information:**

- 6.1 Indicate any individual learning achievements gained outside of the programme and/or any additional information not included above that have been certified by the institution and are relevant to the purpose of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification. For example a mobility period abroad, a work placement, voluntary work etc. for which the student has not received credits or recognition, but which nonetheless contribute to the graduate's learning outcomes.

- **6.2 Further information sources:**

- 6.2 Indicate any further useful information sources and references where more details on the qualification could be sought, e.g.: the department in the issuing institutions; a national information centre; the European Union National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC); the Council of Europe/UNESCO European National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC) and relevant national sources.

## **7 Certification of the supplement**

The purpose of this section is to certify that the Diploma Supplement is officially issued by the institution awarding the qualification.

- **7.1 Date:**

- 7.1 The date the Diploma Supplement was issued. This would not necessarily be the same date the qualification was awarded.

- **7.2 Signature:**

- 7.2 The name and signature of the official certifying the Diploma Supplement.

- **7.3 Capacity:**

- 7.3 The official post of the certifying individual.

- **7.4 Official stamp or seal:**

- 7.4 The official stamp or seal of the institution that provides authentication of the Diploma Supplement.

## **8 Information on the national higher education system**

The purpose of this section is to provide background information on the national HE system within which the qualification is awarded.

Give information on the higher education system: its general access requirements; the national qualifications framework (where applicable), types of institution and the quality assurance or accreditation system<sup>10</sup>. For countries party to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the national qualifications framework should be compatible with and refer to the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA adopted by Ministers in 2005<sup>11</sup>. For countries which are members of the European Union or party to relevant EU programmes, the national framework should also be compatible with the European Qualifications Framework. This description should provide a context for the qualification and refer to it. A standard framework for these descriptions together with actual descriptions should be available for many countries. These have been created with the co-operation of the relevant National (European Union and European Economic Area) Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), European (Council of Europe/UNESCO) National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC), Ministries and Rectors' conferences.

## IV. EXAMPLES OF DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENTS

## V. GLOSSARY

Definitions and usage of terms vary from country to country. To reduce the possibility of misunderstanding this glossary aims only to cover all the main terms used in the papers associated with the Diploma Supplement initiative. It is partly based and fully consistent with the definition used in the 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region.

**ACADEMIC RECOGNITION** refers to the recognition of courses, qualifications or diplomas from one (domestic or foreign) higher education institution by another. Usually this is sought as a basis for access to further new study at the second institution (cumulative recognition) or, as recognition allowing some sort of exemption from having to re-study elements of a programme (recognition with advanced standing). A further type of academic recognition is recognition of studies taken elsewhere in another institution (recognition by substitution) that replace a comparable period of study at the home institution (see **PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION**).

**ACCESS** (to higher education) refers to the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education. Access is distinct from admission, which concerns the individuals' actual participation in the higher education programme concerned.

**ACCREDITATION** is the process by which one higher education institution gains authority to award, and/or gains recognition of, its qualifications from another senior competent authority. This might be the State, a government agency or, another domestic or foreign

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<sup>10</sup> Under the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on The Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), signatories are committed to making arrangements for providing such information. The text of the Convention may be found at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC_en.asp).

<sup>11</sup> [www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/BASIC/050520\\_Framework\\_qualifications.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/BASIC/050520_Framework_qualifications.pdf)

higher education institution (see **FRANCHISE**). The term has its origins in the American system and is used in some European countries in the same way as “recognition”.

**ADMISSION** the act of, or system for, allowing qualified applicants to pursue studies in higher education at a given institution and/or a given programme.

**ASSESSMENT** i) (of institutions or programmes) the process for establishing the educational quality of a higher education institution or programme; ii) (of individual qualifications) the written appraisal or evaluation of an individual’s foreign qualifications by a competent authority; iii) (of individual students) the actual testing of a student’s ability and skills within a programme (e.g. by examination).

**AWARD** this is used synonymously with qualification.

**COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITY** a body officially charged with making binding decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

**COURSE UNIT** a part of a programme of studies that is normally self-contained and assessed separately. Complete study programmes are normally composed of several course units.

**CREDENTIAL** a term sometimes used to refer to a qualification (see **QUALIFICATION**).

**CREDENTIAL EVALUATOR** the individual who makes a judgement on the recognition of foreign qualifications (see **COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITY**).

**CREDIT** the “currency” providing a measure of learning outcomes achieved in a notional time at a given level. Usually associated with credit-based modular courses (see **ECTS**).

**DE FACTO RECOGNITION** refers to situations of unregulated recognition for professional purposes, such as where no national legal authorisation to practice a particular profession exists or is required. This is the most problematic area of professional recognition (see **PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION** and **RECOGNITION**).

**DE JURE RECOGNITION** refers to the recognition of the right to work in a specific country in a regulated profession (e.g. medical doctor) in the European Union or European Economic Area. These situations are subject to various European Union Directives whereby if a citizen is a fully qualified professional in one Member State, he or she has a right to exercise that profession and be recognised as a professional in another Member State (see **REGULATED PROFESSION**, **PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION** and **RECOGNITION**).

**DIPLOMA** here refers to any formally awarded qualification/credential. In some educational systems the term refers to a specific category or type of qualification. It is not being used in this restricted sense here.

**DOUBLE/MULTIPLE DEGREE** Two or more national degrees which are awarded by higher education institutions offering a joint programme.

**ECTS** the European Credit Transfer System credits express the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent, which normally comprises a number of educational components to which credits (on the basis of the learning outcomes and workload) are allocated. ECTS credits are generally expressed in whole numbers.

**ENIC** European National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility (Council of Europe/UNESCO).

**FRANCHISE** the situation where an institution agrees to authorise another institution (nationally or internationally) to deliver an approved programme whilst normally retaining overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. However, significant variations in franchise relationships exist.

**FIELD OF STUDY** the main disciplines or subject areas of a qualification.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLES** show how the existing national or institutional scale is being used in the institution – whether in open access or selective systems – and allow for comparison with the statistical distribution of grades in a parallel reference group of another institution. They represent the statistical distribution of positive grades (pass and above) awarded in each field of study in a specific institution.

**HIGHER EDUCATION** all types of courses of study, or sets of courses (programmes), training, or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to its higher education system. Higher education builds on the level of competence, knowledge and skills generally acquired through secondary education (see **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** and **PROGRAMME OF STUDY**). Higher education normally comes after secondary education in time and is normally offered through higher education programmes at higher education institutions. However, it should be noted that higher education institutions may give courses of study that are not higher education level. Conversely, institutions which are not considered as belonging to the higher education system may offer some higher education programmes. The exact definition of higher education and higher education institutions vary from country to country. For example, in some countries, nursing is considered to be a field of higher education, whereas in other countries, nursing is considered to be part of post-secondary education without being higher education.

**HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** an establishment providing higher education and recognised by the competent authorities as belonging to its system of higher education (see **HIGHER EDUCATION** and **PROGRAMME OF STUDY**).

**JOINT DEGREE** A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering a joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of such joint programme

**LEARNING OUTCOMES** statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.

**LEVEL** the place of a qualification in the higher education system or in the National Qualifications Framework. The number of levels of higher education qualifications vary between countries and/or kinds of higher education (see **LEVEL INDICATORS**).

**LEVEL INDICATORS** these can range from any general information on the role of the qualification to highly detailed specific statements about the nature, skills and competencies associated with the successful completion of parts or all of a qualification (see **LEVEL**).

**LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION** refers to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region adopted in Lisbon April 1997.

**MODULE** a separate and coherent block of learning. Part of a modular programme of studies where the curriculum is divided into a range of similar sized segments.

**NARIC** National Academic Recognition Information Centre (European Union and European Economic Area). Some NARICs also have responsibilities for professional recognition

**PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION** refers to the right to practise and the professional status accorded to a holder of a qualification. In the European Union recognition for professional purposes is defined as the legal act by which a competent authority in a host Member State recognises that the qualifications obtained by an applicant in another Member State are suitable for the pursuit on its territory of a professional activity whose practice is legally regulated (see **REGULATED PROFESSION**, **DE JURE RECOGNITION**, **DE FACTO RECOGNITION** and **RECOGNITION**).

**PROGRAMME OF STUDY** a set of course units, the various components of which complement and build on each other in order to provide the student with a higher education qualification (see **HIGHER EDUCATION**, **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** and **COURSE**). “Programme” also denotes the academic fields of study and requirements that collectively define the qualification (see **FIELD OF STUDY**).

**QUALIFICATION** i) higher education qualification: any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme; ii) qualification giving access to higher education: any diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of an education programme and giving the holder of the qualification the right to be considered for admission to higher education (see **HIGHER EDUCATION**, **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** and **PROGRAMME OF STUDY**). Also termed as any higher education award given for the successful completion of a programme of learning; a generic term that refers to the wide variety of higher education qualifications at different levels and across different countries.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE** refers to the internal and external processes by which the quality of academic provision is maintained.

**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. An assessment of individual qualifications. Such assessment may be any kind

of statement on the value of (in this case) a foreign qualification. **Recognition** refers to a formal statement by a competent recognition authority acknowledging the value of the qualification in question and indicating the consequences of this recognition for the holder of the qualification. For example a qualification may be recognised for the purposes of further study at a given level (academic recognition), or for the use of a title, or for the exercise of employment purposes (professional recognition) (see **COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITY, QUALIFICATION, ACADEMIC RECOGNITION** and **PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION**). Recognition can also refer to the accreditation of a higher education institution by another authority (see **ACCREDITATION**).

**REGULATED PROFESSION** refers to professions whose practice is regulated in some way by law or administrative rules. A given profession may be regulated in one country and not in another (see **DE JURE RECOGNITION**).

**TRANSCRIPT** an official record or breakdown of a student's progress and achievements. Many credit-based education systems employ detailed transcripts that show the credits and grades for units undertaken (e.g. ECTS Transcript of Records). **VALIDATION** the process by which a recognised awarding institution judges that a programme of study leading to a qualification is of appropriate quality and standard. This can be a programme of its own or that of a subordinate institution

### III. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ADVISORY GROUP 4 ON THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT REVISION

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#### **Name of the Advisory Group**

Advisory Group on the Revision of the Diploma Supplement

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#### **Contact persons (Co-Chairs)**

Linda PUSTINA – Albania ([Linda.Pustina@arsimi.gov.al](mailto:Linda.Pustina@arsimi.gov.al))

Cezar Mihai HAJ - Antonela TOMA– Romania ([cezar.haj@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:cezar.haj@uefiscdi.ro); [toma.antonela@medu.ro](mailto:toma.antonela@medu.ro))

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#### **Composition**

Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, BusinessEurope, Council of Europe, EI/ETUCE, ESU, European Commission, EUA, EURASHE, Finland, France, Italy, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Russian Federation, UNESCO<sup>12</sup>.

A number of external experts may assist the Advisory group.

TBC: Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, ENIC/NARIC Network

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#### **Purpose and/or outcome**

The Advisory Group on the Revision of the Diploma Supplement is mandated to support the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO in reviewing the Diploma Supplement, in cooperation with stakeholders. A proposal for a revision should be presented for consultation to the BFUG by 2017.

The original Diploma Supplement was adopted within two different frameworks, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC) and the EU Europass Decision. The revised DS will have to be adopted within the same frameworks. The BFUG can advise on the revised version, but cannot adopt it.

The Advisory Group should give consideration to issues such as the following:

- Ensuring it reflects the recent developments in higher education;
  - Taking account of the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide;
  - Reflecting on the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement;
  - Basing it more closely on Learning Outcomes, increasing its usefulness in recognition procedures;
  - Ensuring coherence between a review of the Diploma Supplement and the possible development of a “Doctoral Supplement” within the European Research Area;
  - Ensuring close cooperation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO;
  - Following up on the adoption of the same revised version of the Diploma Supplement within the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as that of the European Union (Europass) and taking account of relevant developments in other parts of the world.
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<sup>12</sup> Liaison with the WG 2 on “Implementation – Fostering implementation on agreed key commitments” (person TBD)

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## Reference to the Yerevan Communiqué

- Finally, we take note with approval of the reports by the working groups on [...], Structural reforms,[...].

## Reference to the report by the structural reforms working group

- The SRWG suggest that in Yerevan the Ministers:
  - ask that the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO review the Diploma Supplement, in cooperation with stakeholders and taking account of developments in other regions of the world, with a view to ensuring it reflects recent developments in higher education, including the development of learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks, is relevant and up to date for the purposes of mobility and the recognition of qualifications as well as promoting employability and that it takes into account the possibilities for providing up to date information offered by modern information technology, including the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement itself;
  - ensure the adoption of any revised version of the Diploma Supplement, in identical versions, within the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as that of the European Union (Europass) and taking account of relevant developments in other parts of the world;
  - ensure coherence between a review of the Diploma Supplement and the possible development of a “Doctoral Supplement” within the European Research Area.

## Reference to the report of the pathfinder group on automatic recognition

- The PfG recommends to EHEA Ministers
  - to increase the usefulness of the Diploma Supplement for recognition decisions mandating a working group to review the template, promoting a DS model which is based more closely on Learning Outcomes.

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## Specific tasks

- to develop a proposal for a revised version of the Diploma Supplement;
- to consult with external stakeholders;
- to inform the Working group on fostering implementation of agreed key commitments on its progress;
- to present to the BFUG a finalised draft for consultation by its members;
- for the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO to report back to the BFUG on the adopted version of the revised Diploma Supplement;
- to disseminate the adopted version of the revised DS and to promote its use.

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## Reporting

### The BFUG will receive regular reports and updates.

Progress reports will be submitted before the BFUG meetings mid-2016 and end 2016/early 2017. The final report will be presented together with the proposal for a revised Diploma Supplement, for comments, mid-2017.

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## Meeting schedule

[the timetable is just tentative, will be decided by the advisory group at a later stage and concerted with the Council of Europe , UNESCO and the European Commission]

First meeting: January 2016  
Second meeting: May 2016  
Third meeting: June 2016  
Fourth meeting: October 2016  
Fifth meeting: March 2017  
Sixth meeting: September 2017

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## Liaison with other WGs’ and/or advisory groups’ activities

- WG 2 on “Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments”

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## Additional remarks

- These terms of reference may be reviewed in the light of progress of the work, in agreement with the BFUG.
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## IV. LIST OF THE ADVISORY GROUP 4 ON THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT REVISION MEMBERS

### Co-Chairs of the Advisory Group 4

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<b>ALBANIA</b>	Linda Pustina
<b>ROMANIA</b>	Cezar Mihai Haj
<b>ROMANIA</b>	Antonela Toma

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### Members of the Advisory Group 4

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<b>ARMENIA</b>	Krisitna Tsaturyan
<b>AUSTRIA</b>	Nicole Guthan
<b>BELARUS</b>	Valentina Simkhovich
<b>BFUG Secretariat</b>	Fabien Neyrat
<b>BFUG Secretariat</b>	Françoise Profit
<b>BUSINESSEUROPE</b>	Irene Seling
<b>COUNCIL OF EUROPE</b>	Jean-Philippe Restoueix
<b>EC</b>	Mette Moerk Andersen
<b>EC</b>	William O'Keefe
<b>EC</b>	Klara Engels-Perenyi
<b>EI/ETUCE</b>	Agnes Roman
<b>ENIC NARIC</b>	Claudia Gelleni
<b>ENIC NARIC</b>	Wafa Triek
<b>ESU</b>	Tijana Isoski
<b>ESU</b>	Blazhe Todorovski
<b>EUA</b>	Hanne Smidt Sodergard
<b>EURASHE</b>	Michal Karpisek
<b>FINLAND</b>	Susanna Kärki
<b>FRANCE</b>	Jean Louis Gouju
<b>ITALY</b>	Maria Sticchi Damiani
<b>Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee</b>	Allan Bruun Pedersen
<b>UNESCO</b>	Liliana Simionescu
<b>UNESCO</b>	Lene Oftedal
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>	Huw David Landeg Morris

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## V. REFERENCES TO THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT IN OFFICIAL EHEA DOCUMENTS

“The Parties shall promote, through the national information centres or otherwise, the use of the Unesco/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties.” (Lisbon convention, 1997)

“... objectives... in order to establish the European area of higher education...: Adoption of a system of easily and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement...” (Bologna, 1999)

“... facilitate students’ access to the European labour market and enhance the compatibility, attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education. The generalized use of such a credit system and of the Diploma Supplement will foster progress in this direction.” (Prague, 2001)

“They [the ministers] set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language.

They appeal to institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies.” (Berlin, 2003)

“There has been progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ECTS and diploma supplements, but the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent.” (London, 2007)

“Moreover, the Bologna Process has promoted the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to further increase transparency and recognition.” (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 2009)

“We will strive for more coherence between our policies, especially in completing the transition to the three cycle system, the use of ECTS credits, the issuing of Diploma Supplements, the enhancement of quality assurance and the implementation of qualifications frameworks, including the definition and evaluation of learning outcomes. [...] The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent. [...] We [the ministers] will ensure that qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation is based on learning outcomes.” (Bucharest, 2012)





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