



# PRODUCING GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLES FOR GRADE CONVERSION: A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

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# A PERSONAL STORY

- Erasmus-student 1992
- Nijmegen (Radboud University) - NL

It all starts with:



*“Ensuring accurate registration and full recognition for every mobility (Erasmus and beyond) was one of the reasons Ghent University decided to build a mobility module in its own Student Information System”*

*(text for MOOC on the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, part on Recognition, provided by Ghent University to Ecorys on request of European Commission)*

# RECOGNITION MATTERS

- Last midterm assessment of Erasmus+ (2018) suggests: 80% of HE-students receive recognition
- PRIME II (2010) study by the Erasmus Student Network: also 80%...
- Increasing political interest for recognition  
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 26 November 2018 on *Promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad*

# RECOGNITION MATTERS

*“Training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad”*

→ recognition focusses on:

- degrees
- courses (credits)
- [prior experiential learning]

# THE NEXT STEP OF RECOGNITION = GRADE CONVERSION

*“Once there is no discussion anymore about the fact that courses successfully completed abroad are taken into account for the home degree and the credits are automatically recognised, one can start discussing **grade conversion**.”*

*(text for MOOC on the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, part on Recognition, provided by Ghent University to Ecorys on request of European Commission)*





# BRAINSTORM

- Why is grading in your country (not / slightly / very) important for your students?
- What are reasons students might need a (converted) grade?
- Do you provide information on your country's grading system to:
  - Foreign HEI's
  - Home students
  - Host students

# IMPORTANCE OF GRADES / GRADE CONVERSION

- Entitles for an extra (financial) bonus from (grand)parents 😊
  - Opens doors to scholarships/grants
  - Gives access to specific (merit-based) extra-curricular activities
  - Supports applications for Master- / PhD-programmes
  - “ECTS Grade conversion” can offer a counter-weight for GPA
- Sufficient reasons for fair grade conversion!

# GRADE CONVERSION: THE PRINCIPLES (SEE ECTS USERS' GUIDE)

- European HEIs have different grading scales and passing rates
- Mobility students have the right to a fair conversion of the grades they've obtained during a period of study abroad
- Each HEI should produce a grading table for each degree course within a specific subject area
- This will help ensure the transparency of the grading culture and the accurate conversion of grades for mobility students

# GRADING TABLES (GRADE DISTRIBUTION)

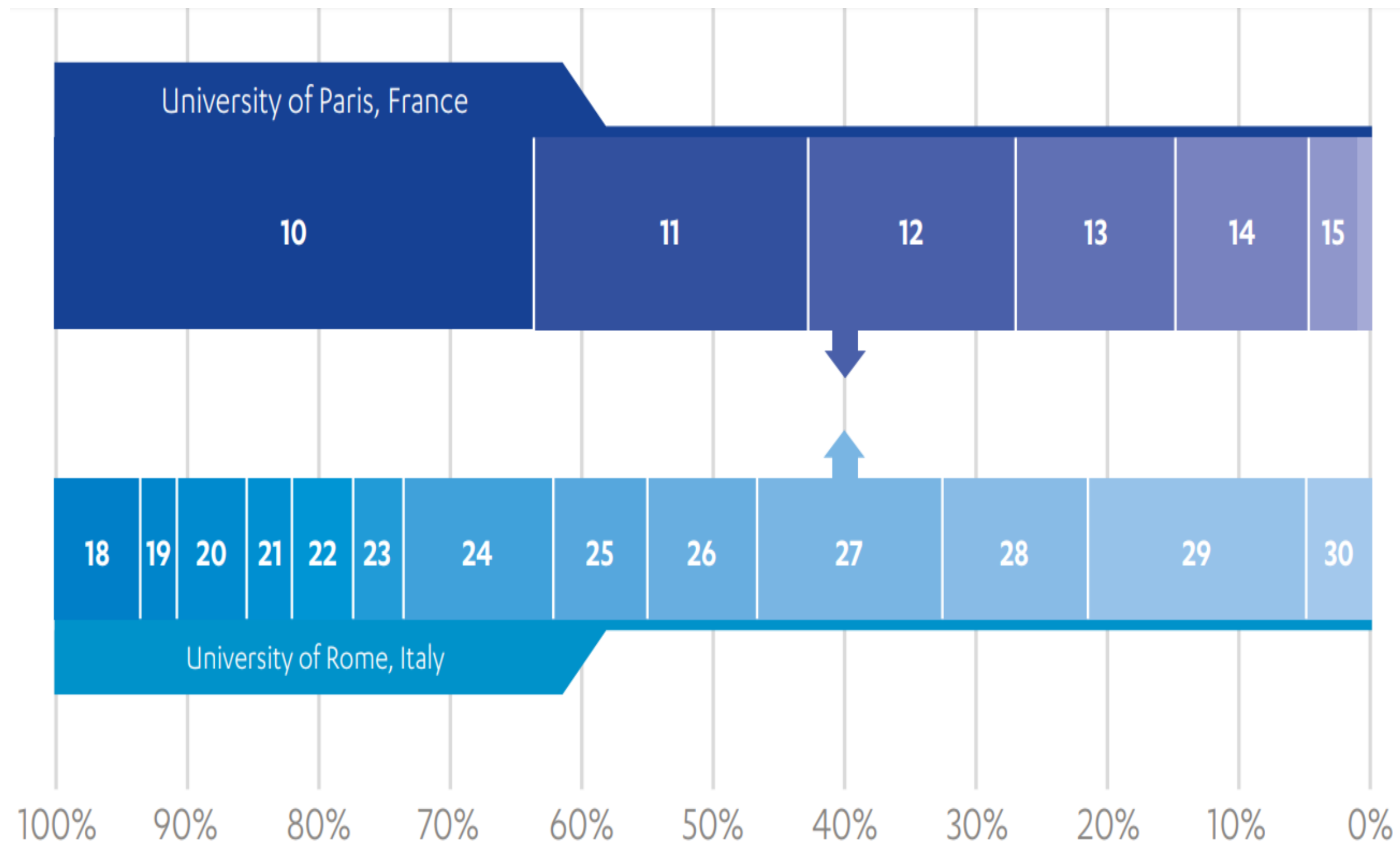
- Based on number of students that passed
- Distribution of the number of students for each passing grade (in percentages)
- By ISCED-code (International Standard Classification of Education)



# EXAMPLE OF A GRADING TABLE

Grades used in institution (from highest to lowest passing grade)*	Number of passing grades awarded to the reference group	Percentage of each grade with respect to the total passing grades awarded	Cumulative percentage of passing grades awarded
10	50	5%	5%
9	100	10%	15%
8	350	35%	50%
7	300	30%	80%
6	200	20%	100%
Total:	1,000	100%	

# GRADE CONVERSION







# EXERCISE: GRADE CONVERSION IN PRACTICE

- A student from the University of Twelvetown spends a semester at the University of Sevencity, studying Sevenish language and literature
- What will be the grades at the home institution?

# EXERCISE

## HOST: University of Sevencity – ISCED 023 Languages

distribution	4	12	8	9	22	7	13	10	15
acc. dis.	100 (low)	96	84	76	67	45	38	25	15 (high)
grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7+	7++

## HOME: University of Twelvetown – ISCED 023 Languages

distribution	16	4	22	10	15	13	8	12
acc. dis.	100 (low)	84	80	58	48	33	20	12 (high)
grade	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2

- Transcript of records of student in “Sevenish language and literature”
- Course “19th Century Sevenish literature” (5 ECTS-credits) 6
  - Course “Sevenish Grammar II” (6 ECTS-credits) 7+

# GRADE CONVERSION IN PRACTICE

Transcript of records of student in “Sevenish language and literature”

- Course “19th Century Sevenish literature” (5 ECTS-credits) 6
- Course “Sevenish Grammar II” (6 ECTS-credits) 7+
- Check ISCED-code
- Look for fair conversion of the grades gained at the University of Sevencity into the grading system of the University of Twelvetown

# EXERCISE

## HOST: University of Sevincity - ISCED 023 Languages

distribution	4	12	8	9	22	7	13	10	15
acc. dis.	100 (low)	96	84	76	67	45	38	25	15 (high)
grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7+	7++

## HOME: University of Twelvetown - ISCED 023 Languages

distribution	16	4	22	10	15	13	8	12
acc. dis.	100 (low)	84	80	58	48	33	20	12 (high)
grade	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2

- Transcript of records of student in “French language and literature”
- Course “Littérature du 19ième siècle” (5 ECTS-credits) 6
  - Course “Grammaire II” (6 ECTS-credits) 7+

Overlap!

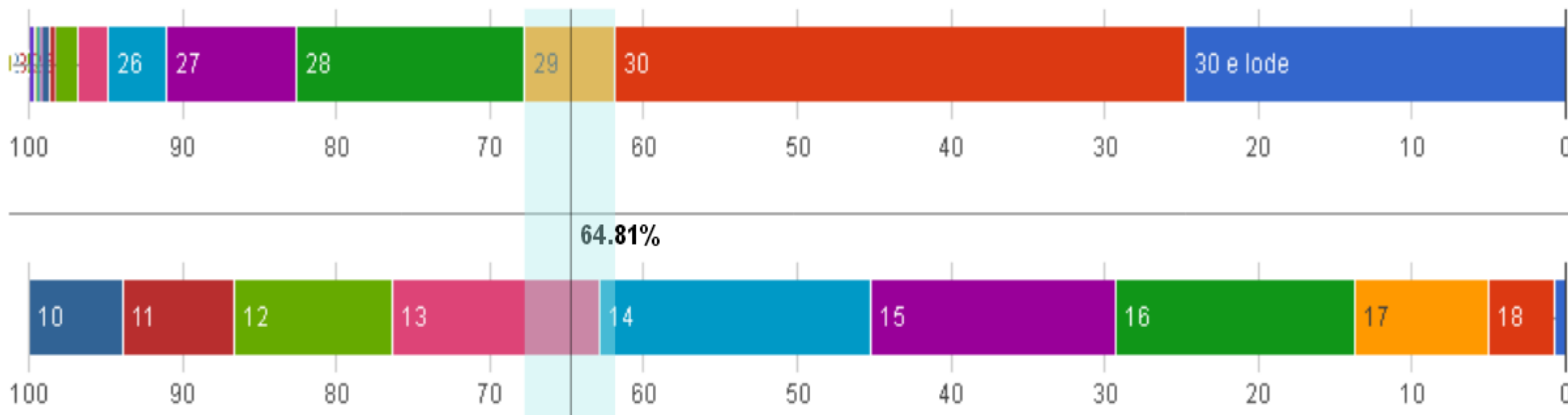
# CONCLUSIONS

- Grade conversion = not hard science; there is still some margin for interpretation
- It is fairer, more robust and more fine-grained than previous or other conversion methodologies
- But it is possible to make it even more fair, robust and fine-grained if you apply a systematic and automated approach

# ENTERS: EGRACONS

Host Institution - Sapienza University of Rome - MASTER - 0222-History and archaeology

Grade	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	30 e lode
Percentage	0.43%	0.05%	0.23%	0.18%	0.43%	0.40%	1.43%	2.01%	3.84%	8.38%	14.90%	5.89%	37.16%	24.70%
Cumulative	100.00%	99.57%	99.52%	99.30%	99.12%	98.70%	98.30%	96.87%	94.86%	91.02%	82.65%	67.75%	61.86%	24.70%



Home Institution - Ghent University - MASTER - 0222-History and archaeology

Grade	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Percentage	6.05%	7.33%	10.20%	13.56%	17.65%	15.88%	15.64%	8.67%	4.22%	0.79%
Cumulative	100.00%	93.95%	86.62%	76.42%	62.86%	45.20%	29.32%	13.68%	5.01%	0.79%

# ATTEMPT TO SOLVE SOME CHALLENGES RE. GRADE CONVERSION

Egracons:

*grade conversion made easy*







# THE REALITY CHECK

- ECTS Users' Guide
- Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
- Egracons
- ...
- Offer a very clear framework for accurate grade conversion
- But Egracons has <200 users... (out of a few thousand ECHE-holders)



# BRAINSTORM

- Do you know if you (as a HEI) or the HEIs in your country are compliant with the ECTS Users' Guide / the ECHE in this respect?
- What could be the reasons why grade conversion is still not working very well in practice (in your country / at your HEI)?

# CONTEXT: EUROPE

- Many European institutions
  - Are stuck in 2008... (A-B-C-D-E-F)
  - Do not use ISCED-codes
  - Use a pass/fail system
- Unlike what is mentioned in the ECTS Users' Guides, in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education,...
- And mainly: they lack IT-infrastructure...

# CONTEXT: WORLDWIDE

- Even a lot more complex
  - No consensus on the use of credit system
- E.g. Three major credit transfer systems are in use in the ASEAN-region:
- AUN – ACTS: the AUN ASEAN Credit Transfer **System**
  - UMAP – UCTS: the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Credit Transfer **Scheme**
  - SEAMEO – RIHED ACTF: the SEAMEO – RIHED Academic Credit Transfer **Framework**
- And certainly no consensus on grade conversion...

# NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE, PRAGMATIC APPROACH

- Since 2018-2019: introduction of a new system at Ghent University, included in the Education and Examination Code
- 5 consecutive steps: preferably step 1, if not possible then 2, if not possible then 3 etc.



# A 5-STEPS APPROACH

- Step 1: Grade distribution table with ISCED reference group
- Step 2: Grade distribution table at the level of the institution / programme / course
- Step 3: Grade distribution table at country level
- Step 4: Grade distribution table based on the A-B-C-D-E scale
- Step 5: No grade distribution table

(+ Pass/Fail)

# 1. GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLE WITH ISCED REFERENCE GROUP

- The 'normal' (ECTS Users' Guide compliant) system
- To be found by means of Egracons or websites/Transcript of Records of partner institutions
- Collected available information on a sharepoint-site available throughout the university



# 2. GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLE AT THE LEVEL OF THE INSTITUTION / PROGRAMME / COURSE

## Grading tables

+ new item or edit this list

Alle items Per country ... Find an item

✓	Country	Name	Name (EN)
	BE	...	Facultés Universitaires Saint Louis a Bruxelles
	BE	...	Haute Ecole 'Groupe ICHEC - ISC Saint-Louis - ISFSC'
	BE	...	ICHEC Brussels Management School
	BE	...	Université de Liège
	BE	...	Université Catholique de Louvain
	CY	...	University of Cyprus
	DE	...	JUSTUS-LIEBIG-UNIVERSITÄT GIESSEN
	DE	...	Justus Liebig University Giessen
	DE	...	Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
	DE	...	University of Göttingen
	DE	...	UNIVERSITAET HAMBURG
	DE	...	University of Hamburg
	DE	...	KARLSRUHER INSTITUT FÜR TECHNOLOGIE
	DE	...	KIT – Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
	DE	...	Technische Hochschule Köln
	DE	...	UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG
	DE	...	University of Leipzig
	DE	...	JOHANNES GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ
	DE	...	Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
	ES	...	UNIVERSIDAD DE CADIZ
	ES	...	University of Cadiz
	ES	...	UNIVERSIDAD DE LEON
	ES	...	The University of León
	ES	...	Universidad Complutense de Madrid



Dienstleistungseinheit Studium und Lehre

### ECTS-Einstufungstabellen

Seit dem Wintersemester 2014/2015 weist das KIT neben der Gesamtnote auf dem Zeugnis im Diploma Supplement eine ECTS-Einstufungstabelle aus. Dies geschieht auf der Grundlage der [Satzung des Karlsruher Instituts für Technologie \(KIT\) zur Ausstellung einer „ECTS-Einstufungstabelle“ als Anlage zum Abschlusszeugnis](#). Die ECTS-Einstufungstabelle stellt die Verteilung der innerhalb einer bestimmten Kohorte erzielten Gesamtnoten dar. Es werden daher für die Gesamtnoten der Kohorte alle Notenschritte von 1,0 bis 4,0 aufgeführt und jeweils die im festgelegten Vergleichszeitraum erreichten Prozentwerte zugeordnet. Sofern eine hinreichend große Kohorte existiert, finden Sie im Folgenden die ECTS-Einstufungstabelle des jeweiligen Studiengangs aus dem zugehörigen Abschlussemester.

#### Lesehilfe zu den ECTS-Einstufungstabellen

A-D	Bachelor	E-G	Bachelor	H-M	Bachelor	N-R	Bachelor	S-Z	Bachelor
	Master		Master		Master		Master		Master

#### Angewandte Geowissenschaften B.Sc.

ECTS-Einstufungstabelle	Download
Abschluss Wintersemester 2017/18	PDF
Abschluss Sommersemester 2017	PDF
Abschluss Wintersemester 2016/17	PDF
Abschluss Sommersemester 2016	PDF
Abschluss Wintersemester 2015/16	PDF
Abschluss Sommersemester 2015	PDF
Abschluss Wintersemester 2014/15	PDF

#### Architektur B.Sc.

ETCS-Einstufungstabelle	Download
Abschluss Wintersemester 2017/18	PDF
Abschluss Sommersemester 2017	PDF
Abschluss Wintersemester 2016/17	PDF
Abschluss Sommersemester 2016	PDF

### 3: GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLE AT COUNTRY LEVEL

- Either from egracons
- Or: based on our own statistically relevant available data
- Included in Sharepoint site

## 4: GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLE BASED ON THE A-B-C-D-E SCALE

- The pre-2009 ECTS Grading Table (A-B-C-D-E-scale) is still used by many European universities...
- In essence this is also a (very rudimentary) grade distribution table (and better than nothing)

Grade	E	D	C	B	A
Distribution	100%	90%	65%	35%	10%

## 5: NO GRADE DISTRIBUTION TABLE

- Very often the case outside the Erasmus+ programme countries
- But also still with Erasmus-partner institutions
- Advise to the programmes: communicate in advance about the methodology for grade conversion to be used, preferably on the basis of clear agreements with the partner institution

# PASS-FAIL

- Special case = institutions / programmes / courses without grading; just PASS/FAIL
- Impossible to translate this in a local grade (although many attempt, but on what basis?)
- Proposal (legally possible): use the pass/fail and not give a local grade
- Consequence: these courses do not count to calculate a final grade

# A FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Erasmus without paper project is well under way
- Its use may become (gradually) compulsory in the new Erasmus+ programme from 2021 onwards
- When information (e.g. of Transcripts of Records) will be interchanged, grade conversion will be done automatically (when information is included in Egracons...)



# THE FUTURE USE OF ECTS DOCUMENTS

- Backoffice exchange of information  
(not just the documents)
- By means of APIs (application programming interfaces)
- No need for “physical” documents, signatures,...
- Need for common reference framework

# CONCLUSIONS

- Recognition is a crucial success factor of student mobility
- It's not just about the credits; it's also about the grades
- ECTS has come up with a fair, robust and fine-grained methodology
- All HEIs are supposed to be using this, but...
- Have to deal with it and hopefully EWP can help!



# EXTRA: DEMO OF EGRACONS

[www.ugent.be](http://www.ugent.be)



Universiteit Gent



@ugent



[instagram.com/ugent](https://www.instagram.com/ugent)



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