



Understanding Learning Outcomes and ECTS: A view from Scotland

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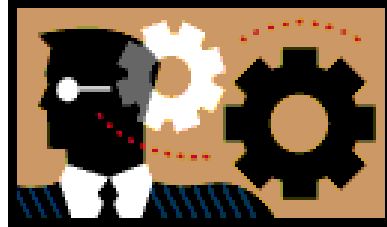


Overview

- Stakeholders
- Credit frameworks
- Learning Outcomes-based Approach
- View from Scotland

Stakeholders

- Learners
- Universities
- Employers
- Society



What is a 'credit framework'?

- ` A credit framework is a way of valuing, measuring, describing and comparing learning achievement, and credits themselves are a quantified means of expressing the **volume of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workload.**' ⁽¹⁾



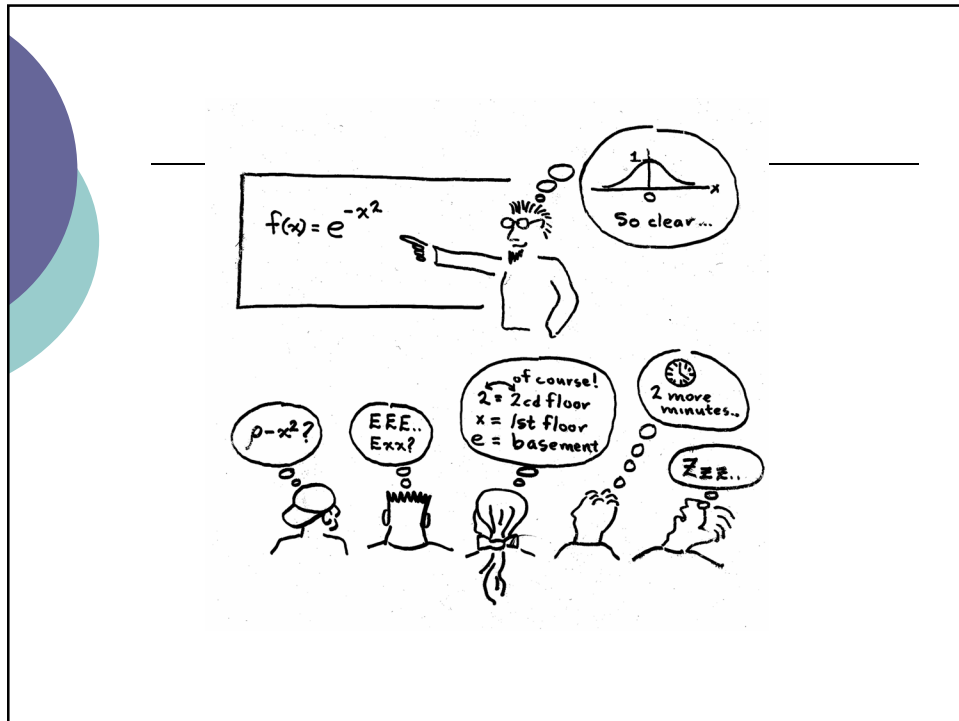
ECTS

- Exists 'for the purposes of credit transfer of mobile students' ⁽²⁾
- "is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study" ⁽³⁾



The Issue of Student Workload

- How calculated?
- How realistic? Who decides?
- Based on contact hours – or not?
- Dependent on view of the learning-teaching process



Learning Outcomes-Based Approach

- Outcomes-based approach (learner centred) versus content-based approach (teacher centred)
- Provides a common format for the description and comparison of disparate forms of learning
- Can encourage the development of more innovative forms of assessment



Learning Outcomes

- Central to credit framework developments
- Form an 'educational currency'
- Contribute to better information, greater clarity and improved transparency for **all** stakeholders



View from Scotland

- SCOTCAT - SCQF
- Descriptors – level and volume
- Credits – 'notional student effort'/workload
- Stakeholders supported the development of a credit framework as a tool to support learning



View from Scotland

- Good and developing understanding of learning outcomes and credit amongst stakeholders
- Nationally agreed, accepted and utilised approach
- Stakeholder participation in quality enhancement e.g.
<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk>



SCQF

- SCQF <http://www.scqf.org.uk>
- Defines the **level** of the learning outcomes from level 2 (Access2) to level 12 (doctorate)
- Defines the **volume** of the learning outcomes (in credit points) related to the amount of time that an average learner might take to complete them



SCQF

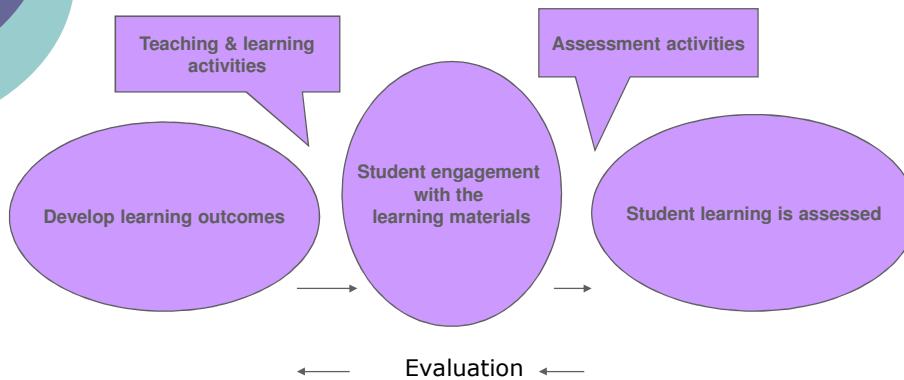
- Generic statements describing the characteristics and context of learning expected at each level
- Five areas within each level: knowledge & understanding; practice; generic cognitive skills; communication, ICT & numeracy; autonomy, accountability & working with others



Curriculum Development using Learning Outcomes

- Define the learning outcomes
- *What do we want learners to be able to do?*
- Select appropriate assessment methodologies
- Select teaching & learning activities to support learners' achievement of the learning outcomes

Curriculum Development - Process




Varieties of Learning Outcome

- **Intended** learning outcomes – linked to credit, must be achieved and will be assessed
- **Emergent** learning outcomes – linked to personal learning, may or may not emerge, unanticipated and learner-specific



Tools to Use in Creating Learning Outcomes

- SCQF <http://www.scqf.org.uk>
- Subject Benchmarking
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp>
- Employability profiles
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability/disciplines>



The Role of Learning Outcomes in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- To evaluate the appropriateness of the curriculum – scope, level etc.
- Maintains standard of delivery across several cohorts
- Ensure that course/module complies with standards



For example ...



Pg Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education programme at Dundee

- Master's **level** (level 11 on the SCQF)
- 60 **credit** programme (comprised of three 20 credit modules)
- NSE = 600 hours overall/200 per module (learning, teaching & assessment activities)



View from Scotland in relation to ECTS

- National framework relates to ECTS through the 2 key elements of credit (volume/workload and learning outcomes)
- 120 SCQF credits = 60 ECTS
- Diploma Supplement – refers to ECTS credits



References

- 1) A Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (2005)
- 2) Bologna with Student Eyes (2005)
- 3) ECTS Users' Guide in Bologna with Student Eyes (2005)
- 4) With thanks to Gerard Madill, Universities Scotland, and to the anonymous cartoonist.