

SMOOTH RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC  
QUALIFICATIONS:  
A PERSONAL VIEW FROM A UNIVERSITY

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# WHAT IS TO BE RECOGNISED?

- 1 Study periods in other universities (abroad, but also domestic).
- 2 Transfer students who want to change universities mid-way.
- 3 Full formal qualifications (*per se*, but also relevant for admission to master / doctorate).
- 4 Coming from Europe, but also from third countries.

“The result should be recognition, not rejection”. Always?

Recognition should be rigorous, but not rigid.

Barbara has identified five elements of Good Practice: **quality, level, learning outcomes, workload, profile.**

- Level is given by the Bachelor/Master/Doctorate (BMD) structure.
- Learning outcomes should be publicised in a clear way by universities. Require expertise to be assessed.
- Workload is measured in ECTS

**Do ECTS and BMD solve the problem?**

**Not completely, I am afraid.**

# ECTS AND BMD AS “ACADEMIC EURO”

ECTS And the Bachelor/Master/Doctorate structure are sometimes described as an “academic euro”.

I agree, but **they are euro coins, not euro banknotes.**



We use a common currency, but each country (or even university) makes its own design.

Details are not the same in all countries, or in all institutions.

- Most countries have 3 years Bachelor + 2 years Master. But some have 4 years Bachelors.
- The French Grandes Écoles and Engineering Schools admit students after 2 years of postsecondary work and their programmes take 3 years. Are they master's level?

This is a difficulty for all types of recognition.

When Spain decided to have 4 year Bachelor + (mostly) 1 year Master **we knew** that this problem would arise.

## Study periods

- When a first year Laurea Magistrale student from Rome comes to UAM, do I allow him to take advanced Bachelor courses? Will his university recognise them?
- When a fourth year Grado student from UAM goes to Rome, is she allowed to take Master's courses? Will I recognise them?

The answer to both questions is **yes** in our exchanges with Italian universities. Unfortunately, others are reluctant.

**My advise (good practice?):** be flexible and take a “global point of view”.

**Bad practice.** Classify each course and each student in a unique level and do not allow mismatches

**Good practice.** Ask yourself:

- Would this be a Bachelor/Master student if she were at my university?
- Would it be adequate for her to take this course?
- What is her overall level of competence?

## We all know:

- 1 ECTS = (typically) 25-30 hours of work.
- 1 academic year = 60 ECTS.
- 1 academic year = 1500-1800 hours of work.

ECTS euro-coins: not everybody makes the same interpretation of this arithmetical information.

- Number of weeks in the academic year?
- Courses have 3-4-5-6-7-8-9-12 ECTS.

But it is OK: it provides an easy to apply comparison tool. I have never had any serious difficulty.



The ECTS grading scale (A, B, C, D, E) is imprecise.

Example: "B: above the average standard but with minor errors".

- Different countries/disciplines have very different views of what are "minor errors".
- Many countries have traditional qualitative grading scales. Equating them to A, B, C, D, E is tempting.
- Our knowledge of foreign grades is often biased: we see foreigners applying to doctoral schools, not so many from the bottom half of their class.

Examples of misconceptions (bad practice?). In Italy everybody gets 29 or 30. French 16/20 = Spanish 8/10.

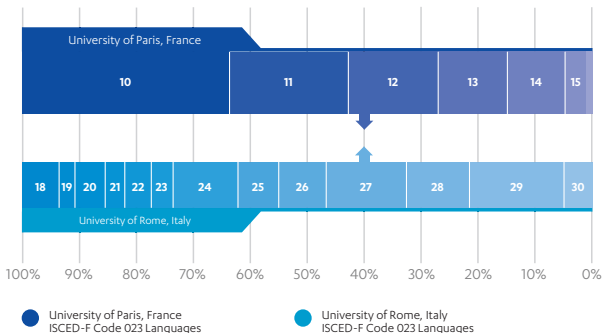
## ECTS User's' guide (2015)

### Examples for grade conversion<sup>5</sup>:

1 Grade conversion based on two grade distribution tables from two reference groups belonging to different national grading systems:

**Reference group A in Italy** (*Passing grades ranging from 18 to 30 cum laude*)  
Reference group/Field of study: ISCED Code 023 Languages

**Reference group B in France** (*Passing grades ranging from 10 to 20*)  
Reference group/Field of study: ISCED Code 023 Languages



## ECTS USER'S' GUIDE (2015)

To ensure transparent and coherent information on the performance of the individual student, **each HEI should provide**—in addition to their national/institutional grading scale and an explanation of the scale— **a statistical distribution table of the passing grades awarded in the programme or field of study attended by the student (grade distribution table) showing how the grading scale is actually used in that programme.** The grade distribution table was first introduced in the ECTS Users' Guide in 2009, **as a replacement for the previous ECTS grading scales (A, B, C, D, E), which are not used anymore.**

**Bad practice.** I have very seldom seen such a grade distribution table. I mostly see ECTS grading scales.

### Student's grades

MATHEMATICAL FINANCE I	1S	Yes	20 (3.3)	10.00
MIDDLEWARE TECHNOLOGIES FOR DISTRIBUTED SYSTEMS	1S	Yes	30 (3.1)	5.00
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING	1S	Yes	25 (3.3)	7.00
SOFTWARE PROJECT	1S	Yes	23 (3.3)	5.00
STOCHASTIC DYNAMICAL MODELS	1S	Yes	24 (3.2)	8.00

### Grading information

(1)	Course unit code	Refer to the course catalogue <a href="http://www.polinternational.polimi.it/en">http://www.polinternational.polimi.it/en</a> > Search for lessons > Search a course > ID/Description course
(2)	Duration of course unit	Y 1 full academic year 1S 1 semester
(3)	Description of the institutional grading system	Individual exams are graded on a scale from 1 to 30, where 18 is the minimum passing grade and 30 cum laude (30L) is the highest grade.
(4)	ECTS credits	1 full academic year = 60 credits 1 semester = 30 credits

#### DISTRIBUTION OF THE EXAMS SCORES

The following table shows the percentages for each exam score obtained in the period specified. The distributions were calculated by using the data of the Field of Study.

Note	Period	Field of Study	Sample Size	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	30L
3.1	01/11/2016 31/10/2019	LM-32 Computer systems engineering (Laurea magistrale - DM 270/04)	19165	3.98	2.32	3.41	3.44	4.20	5.41	6.90	7.47	8.10	9.96	10.96	8.49	13.01	13.15
3.2	01/11/2016 31/10/2019	LM-44 Mathematical modeling for engineering (Laurea magistrale - DM 270/04)	6523	2.51	2.18	2.25	2.51	3.16	3.85	5.29	6.04	6.26	10.87	13.21	8.97	17.29	13.81
3.3	01/11/2016 31/10/2019	L-8 Information Technology (Laurea - DM 270/04)	32684	6.26	6.52	6.57	6.58	7.53	7.76	8.56	8.03	7.78	7.74	6.80	4.80	7.56	5.45

- Good practice [Barbara]. Data base of modules that were recognised.

But...

- You can not expect to find exactly what you have at home. In fact, mobility is richer if you do something different. Be flexible in matching what the other university has to offer with your curriculum.
- Look for similar learning outcomes, rather than exact same course descriptions.

## Universidad de Florencia



### Académico

**Requisitos idiomas: Inglés B1 recomendado**  
Obligación de matrícula de mínimo 20 créditos  
El primer semestre empieza en octubre  
El segundo semestre empieza en octubre

INFO ERASMUS:

[https://www.unifi.it/vp-10340-erasmus-students.html?ne\\_wlang=eng](https://www.unifi.it/vp-10340-erasmus-students.html?ne_wlang=eng)

INFO ESTUDIOS:

<https://www.unifi.it/p-cor2-2016-101227-B025-C78-1-0.html>

### Datos de interés

Temp. media: 31 – 18°C (Julio)  
11 - 2 °C (Enero)

Coste de la vida: 700 euros/mes  
Población: 380.000 hab.

Asignatura Florencia	Asignatura UAM
B000365 - Statistica I	16446 - PROBABILIDAD I
B001881 - Analisi Matematica III	16447 - <b>TOPOLOGÍA</b>
B005492 - Geometria II	16448 - ESTADÍSTICA I
B005493 - Sistemi Dinamici	16449 - VARIABLE COMPLEJA I
B012975 - Logica Matematica	16450 - <b>MODELIZACIÓN</b>
B018753 - Matematiche elementari da un punto de vista superiore	16452 - ECUACIONES EN DERIVADAS PARCIALES
B018782 - Processi Stocastici	16455 - PROBABILIDAD II
B018796 - Teoria dei graffi e Combinatoria	16457 - TEORÍA DE LA INTEGRAL Y DE LA MEDIDA
B018797 - Teoria dei Numeri	16460 - TEORÍA COMBINATORIA Y ANALÍTICA DE NÚMEROS
B018799 - Variabile Complessa I	16466 - INVESTIGACIÓN OPERATIVA
B018817 - Calcolo delle probabilità	16467 - LÓGICA MATEMÁTICA
	16470 - TEORÍA ALGEBRAICA DE NÚMEROS
	16471 - TEORÍA DE CÓDIGOS Y CRIPTOGRAFÍA
	16472 - VARIABLE COMPLEJA II
	16474 - SEMINARIO

## SUMMARY (BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE)

- 1 Procedures and responsibilities for recognition should be clear.
- 2 Recognition is both an administrative and an academic matter.
- 3 Administrative experts should check that all materials are properly delivered and up to standards.
- 4 Academic experts should make academic decisions (admission, learning outcomes, grades,...).
- 5 Good practice (?): academic Erasmus coordinators may specialise in certain countries / institutions.
- 6 Do not take a “local view”: is this specific module done exactly as my university?
- 7 Look globally. Citing Barbara (again): Are there substantial differences? Would these differences jeopardise the successful continuation of the studies?

Thank you for your  
attention!

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