NU Learning and Teaching Toolkit#5

Calculating student workload within the ECTS

Dear all,

We hope this Toolkit will be helpful in understanding the nature of ECTS credit system and the estimation of student workload.

AQE Team, Office of the Provost

What is the ECTS?

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

A learner-centered system for credit accumulation and transfer, based on the principle of transparency of learning, teaching and assessment processes. ECTS credits express the volume of learning and the student workload required to attain program/course learning outcomes (ECTS Users' Guide).

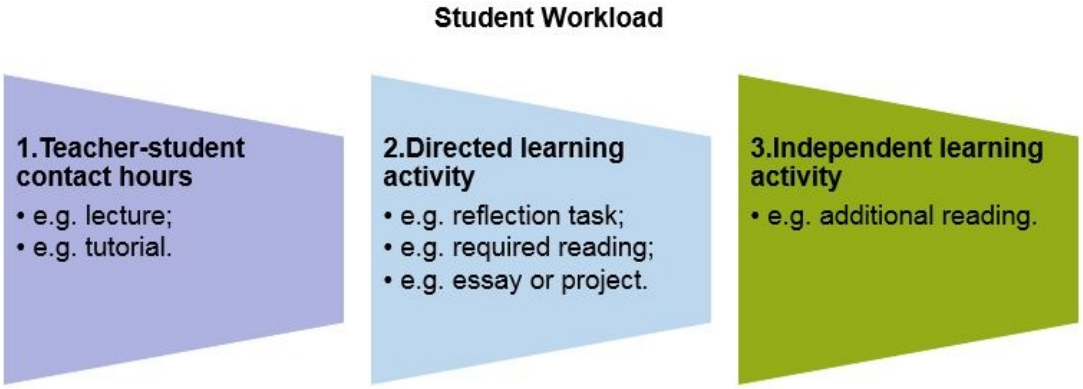
Why do we use the ECTS?

ECTS is a key element of the Bologna process to which Kazakhstan signed up in 2010. The system:

- shifts the focus from the teacher to the learner (learning outcomes-based approach and student-centered learning);
- supports flexible learning pathways and approaches;
- facilitates the transfer of credits from one institution to another;
- recognizes degrees throughout the EHEA (European Higher Education Area);
- recognizes prior learning and encourages lifelong learning;
- enables participation in Erasmus and other exchange programs;
- facilitates program and course design.

Student Workload

Workload is calculated in hours that students may need to complete all assignments and learning activities (preparation time, lectures, seminars and personal reading, examination preparation, project preparation etc.) needed to accomplish the planned learning outcomes. Student workload includes the following components (Diagram 1):



How do we calculate workload associated with ECTS credits?

To compute workload in ECTS, please remember that:

1 ECTS credit equates to 25-30 hours of student workload;

1 semester typically consists of 30 ECTS credits.

1 year comprises 60 ECTS credits (1500-1800 Student Learning Hours);

- Think carefully about what you expect *typical* students to do outside the classroom and **how much time this may take**. Plan learning activities to support the achievement of the learning outcomes.
- Keep in mind that, depending on the course, learning outcomes, delivery mode, year and cycle/level of study, the number of contact and independent learning hours may vary significantly. For more details and references, please read the key source of information - ECTS Users' Guide

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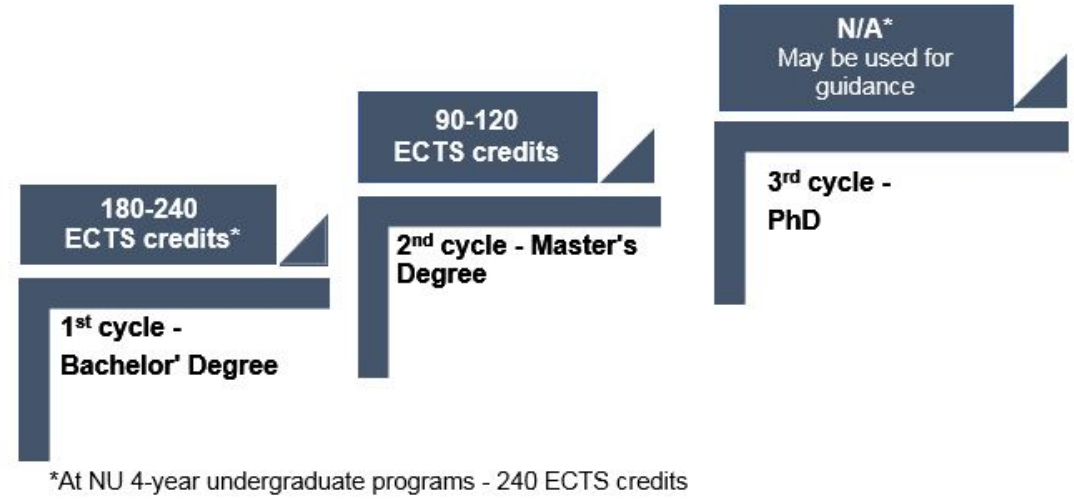
ECTS and the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA

The Framework indicates the level of the final qualification and specifies ECTS credit levels with appropriate descriptors (Diagram 2).



Please read the Regulatory Framework for Undergraduate Programs and Courses for

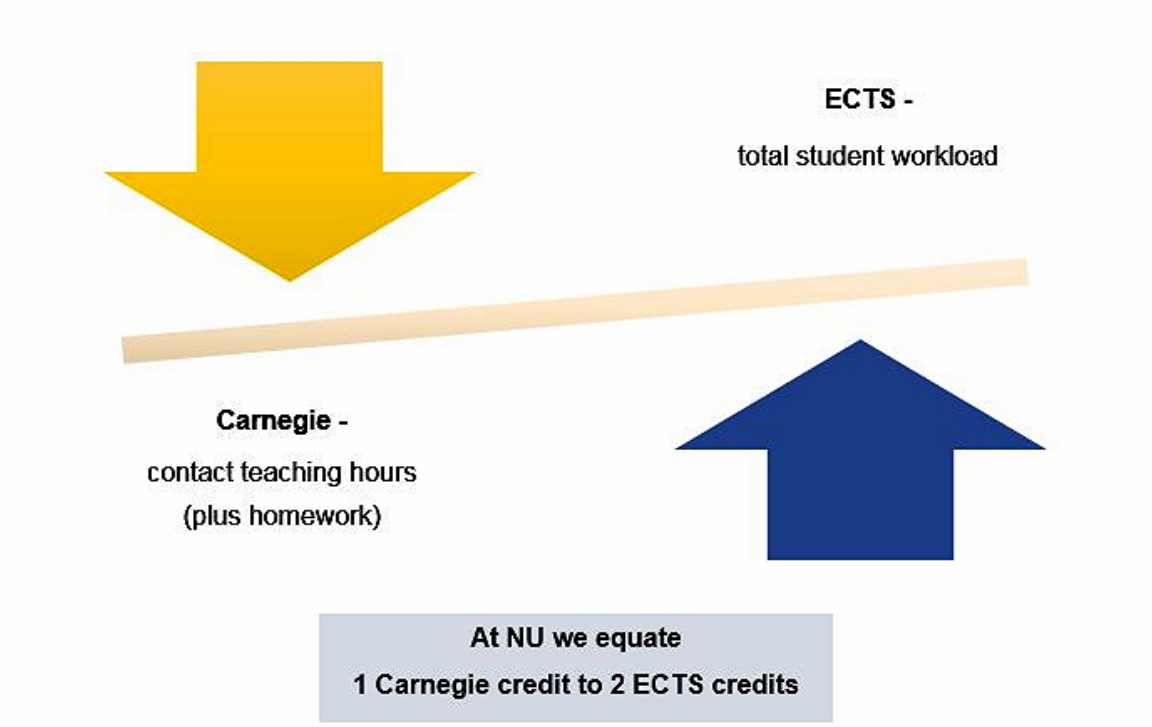
more details on the course weighting for NU **undergraduate** programs.

ECTS can be applied to the doctoral cycle, although this is not mandatory. ECTS credits might be allocated to the whole program, or to some of its components (e.g. taught course units).

ECTS credits vs Carnegie credits

What is the difference between the ECTS and Carnegie credit systems? While Carnegie credits focus on teaching hours, the ECTS credits focus on student workload.

Please note, that along with teaching and self-study, ECTS credits also include exam workload (Diagram 3).



If you are used to the Carnegie credit system, you may wish to compare it with the ECTS (Table 1).

Let's consider an example for a typical NU course of 6 ECTS:

ECTS	Carnegie
6 ECTS approximates to **150-180 hours** of student workload	**6 ECTS** approximates to **3 Carnegie credits (approximately 135 hours)**
This can be broken down according to instructors' requirements/in line with the LOs (Learning Outcomes). Some courses may require more independent student workload and fewer teaching contact hours.	45 hours of teaching hours Self-study = 90 hours Students may conduct learning activities in addition to these hours (e.g. preparation for exams)

Communicate workload to your students

Please articulate course expectations to your students. Explain how much time is expected for different learning activities. This will help students to manage their time and avoid burnout or underworking. This information should be included into the course documentation.

Coordinate workload within the program

It is important to distribute student workload appropriately. Discuss with your colleagues the distribution of time-consuming projects and assessments throughout the semester across the program.

Monitor student workload

Through focus group interviews, course evaluation surveys monitor the program/course to define if the learning outcomes and the estimated workload are attainable, realistic and adequate. Take appropriate actions, if needed.

References

ECTS Users' Guide

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/bologna/ESG_2015.pdf. (2015). Brussels, Belgium

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en