



## Bologna is a process, not a processed meat


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## This presentation is a highly condensed preview of

- *The Bologna Club: What U.S. Higher Education Can Learn from a Decade of European Reconstruction,*
- **the first part of IHEP's Global Performance Initiative, sponsored by the Lumina Foundation for Education.**
- **3 versions (policy brief, essay, and research monograph) will be issued this spring.**
- **IHEP will also place a resource library of over 500 Bologna-related documents (most in English) on-line, in 25 topical bins.**



## So what is the Bologna Process, and why do we need to pay attention?

- **It is the largest restructuring of higher education ever undertaken.**
- **It involves 16 million students in 46 countries, with over 4000 institutions of higher education, some of which have been doing business the same way for 800 years.**
- **They have all agreed to adopt common rules for degrees, credits, and certification and communication of student outcomes.**
- **That means they will at least sing in the same key, though not necessarily the same tune.**



## The initial Bologna declaration of 1999

- **Has subsequently been modified in bi-annual meetings of education ministers in Prague , Berlin, Bergen, and London**
- **The shape of Bologna now intersects 1997 agreements on labor market qualifications and mutual credential recognition reached by EU representatives in Lisbon**
- **... And moves considerably beyond “harmonization of architecture” goals of 4 nations’ education ministers (1998)**
- **These are not just ministerial agreements—the process is playing out as we speak, though at different speeds in different countries, supplemented by legislation.**


## Why Did They Do It?

- **Transparency of programs and degrees with a common framework and cycles**
- **Promotion of student mobility and integration in the Euro-labor market**
- **Facilitate resumption/continuation of study (stop out and transfer phenomena)**
- **Goad to cooperative, trans-national curriculum development**
- **An extension of Euro-integration.**

## What the European continent gets

- **A coordinated, harmonious system of higher education that knows no borders.**
- **Coherent links to labor markets that know no borders.**
- **Documentation of student learning and attainment that knows no borders.**
- **The original deadline was 2010, but 2020 is more likely.**

**So what are the elements, and how does it work?**



Bologna is rumored to be only about degree-cycles, but the core of it is something else—and bigger:

- **Qualifications frameworks (European, and national)**
- **“Tuning” (disciplinary qualifications frameworks, not originally part of Bologna)**
- **A student-centered credit system (ECTS)**
- **Diploma Supplements, intended as transparent documentation of student attainment.**

**In this discussion, we will focus on qualifications and credits.**



## **What’s a “qualification framework”?**

- **A statement of what it takes to earn a credential, phrased in terms of learning outcomes, not credits or time—and not some dubious “value added” measure, either.**
- **The “learning outcomes” are divided into statements about knowledge, understanding, skills, applications, and cognitive capacities**
- **At each degree level, the criteria of performance on each of these components are ratcheted up in terms of demands/challenge**
- **The statements are called “descriptors,” but if done right, they are really criterion-referenced benchmarks.**


## Four strata of qualifications frameworks

- **Transnational: the European Qualifications Framework**
- **National qualifications frameworks, which allow for system idiosyncrasies**
- **Institutional qualifications frameworks, which have received the least attention**
- **Disciplinary/field qualifications, articulating benchmarks of performance at the summative moment of each level of study. This is where the Tuning Project model takes hold. You can also see it in the French version of an NQF and in the Swedish higher education law of 2006.**

## The EQF : general statements for three degree cycles

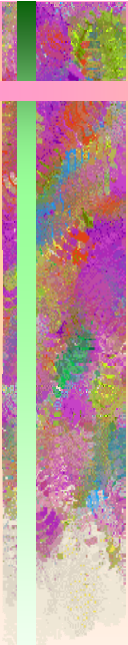
- **1<sup>st</sup> cycle (bachelor's), and including "short-cycle" credentials as a stage of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle**
- **2<sup>nd</sup> cycle (master's)**
- **3<sup>rd</sup> cycle (doctorate)**

**Notice that they did not use the English default terms out of respect for historical labels in each country, but the fact of 3 cycles (and the short-cycle) forced a lot of rationalization.**



## 5 parallel learning outcome constructs across the cycles

- Reference points for knowledge and understanding
- Contexts and modes of application of knowledge and understanding
- Fluency in the use of increasingly complex data and information.
- Breadth and depth of topics on which the student can communicate, and range of audiences for that communication.
- Degree of autonomy exercised or gained.



## As one moves up the credential ladder, one also notes in the QFs:

- The fading of occupational orientation
- Emergence of social and ethical dimensions of learning
- Passage from well-defined contexts and problems to more ambiguous and dynamic contexts and problems.



## National qualifications frameworks

- Have proven more difficult because they force countries to develop or revise benchmark statements for progress from pre-K through doctoral degrees, and that requires a lot of consensus and legislation
- So we have completed QFs in Ireland, Scotland, EWNI, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, and a different kind of QF in France, and virtually nowhere else.
- The education ministers are impatient with progress here; the Swedish national legislature was impatient enough to write the NQF itself in 2006.



## Then we have “Tuning,” a bottom-up movement

- To create parallel sets of “reference points” for qualification frameworks at the disciplinary (program) level, and with a broad participation of students and employers.
- Started with 9 disciplines, has added 2 more, and is moving across the provision chain. About 200 institutions in 17 countries have participated to date.
- Matched in other disciplines, e.g. music and engineering, through transnational organizations.
- A lot of workshops on how to write criterion-referenced learning outcome statements in your field.
- And we now find an echo-Tuning project involving about 180 institutions in 12 Latin American countries. That ought to tell you something about the atmosphere of Bologna reforms.



## Think about what all this means

- **You get coherence and transparency in your credential system**
- **You know for sure what levels of knowledge, understanding, skill and application those credentials represent**
- **And when your first statements are about what students are expected to learn and you derive your credit system from an analysis of the tasks and time students spend to reach those benchmarks you have changed the very orientation of your higher education system!**



## You start paying attention to students before paying attention to anything else

- Hence, the “social dimension” of Bologna: access for isolated populations, new pathways into and through higher ed, variation in the pace of progression, assessment of prior learning, and the expansion of part-time provisions.
- And the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), in which the primary reference point is student workload, not faculty contact hours.
- And there are clear messages—even agreements---about student responsibility for meeting these efforts half-way.



## Defining credits by student workload

- Type of course (lecture, seminar, research seminar, practical, laboratory, internship, fieldwork---and combinations of the above)
- Learning activities (attending lectures, practicing lab skills, writing papers, reading, creating artistic work, etc.)
- Assessments (oral exam, written exam, presentation, portfolio, report on fieldwork/internship, etc.)

## Student workload example

Lecture (2), section (1), lab (1)

Attending all (14 weeks)	56 hrs.
Background reading	42 hrs.
Laboratory preparation	14 hrs.
Laboratory reports	28 hrs.
Paper writing (2)	24 hrs.
Examination preparation	12 hrs.
Examinations	2 hrs.

**Total: 178 hrs.**

**Value: 7 credits, using a ratio of hours/25. The divisors established to date are in the 25-30 range.**

## Virtues and limitations of ECTS

- Some countries have their own credit systems/formulas, but (a) all are now based on student workload, and (b) all translate their credits to the ECTS standard
- You get mechanical approaches to the assignment of credits in some places,
- whereas in others, each course module is rated by level of challenge, and credit distributions are specified among degree qualifications, e.g. a minimum of 40% of ECTS must be earned in “level 3 course work”

## Estimated v. Actual Workload

- How do you determine actual workload?
- Do you adjust credits accordingly?
- If so, how?
- What carries the most weight in adjustments—type of course, learning activities, assessments, type of competences expected?

## Whooaa!!! 'Type of competences' ???

- **History:** at the end of the course unit, learners are expected to demonstrate their ability to comment on and annotate texts and documents according to critical canons.
- **Physics:** ...learners are expected to describe and explain the function of basic devices of optoelectronics: optical fibers, liquid crystal displays, bi-polar and surface field effect transistors, and MOS light emitting diodes.

**In other words, the benchmarking of the QF seeps down to the course level. If done right, these go beyond the traditional syllabus.**

## Credits for non-formal and informal learning

- Are a form of transfer, and ...
- Require comparable learning outcome statements, i.e. criteria, to those awarded through formal coursework.
- Number of credits awarded is the difficult issue, since student work load cannot be validated, so consortia of institutions are piloting approaches together.
- A historical EU interest that has not historically involved the formal postsecondary sector in most countries.
- It's part of the lifelong learning outreach to an aging workforce, and part of the "social dimension" of Bologna

## And as for degrees . . .it's BA/MA

- The new norm for duration has become 3+2
- As of 2005, the new norm was practiced in 11 of 28 countries surveyed
- 8 others still held to a 4 year BA; and variants by field abound.
- In only 5 countries can a student move directly from a BA to MA program without selection
- Testing of variations in BA-to-MA transitions (e.g. in Germany, where the states regulate the transitions) is in process
- A majority of 1<sup>st</sup> cycle students intend to continue to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle (but that, too, varies by country and field)

## Why do we need to pay attention, Part I?

- A lot of Bologna is about accountability and quality assurance.
- Our European colleagues have struggled to bring the components of a more transparent system of higher education into being. They are addressing our problems, too.
- We can learn from their efforts. If we bother to look beyond our borders, we will get ideas. We may not do things exactly the same way, but we should at least learn how to sing in the same key.

## So why do we need to pay attention, Part II?

- ECTS (which actually started in 1989) as a major component of the Bologna Process, is a model of borderless transfer.
- The two-cycle degree structure offers clear steps in the completion of undergraduate study .
- Qualification frameworks are the clearest public statement of what we guarantee to students, the economy, and the society.
- The transparency of these components has already drawn imitative processes in Latin America (Tuning), the North Africans are moving to the 3+2 cycles, the Australians have introduced Diploma Supplements, and other former colonial countries in Africa and Asia will not be far behind.

## Prediction...

- By 2030, what started as European will be global, providing transfer without borders.
- The US will either join or be left behind.
- It is a challenge unlike any other issued to our system of higher education, and we've been soundly asleep to date.
- We had better get started---and in more positive ways than simply rejecting degree equivalencies!



# References

The literature on Bologna, both formal and fugitive, is huge.

Much---but not all---of it is in English.

The annual *Trends* reports for the European University Association and the *Stock-Taking* reports for the European Commission are a good place to start, and they are available on-line.

Beyond that, Google everything and follow the links!