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Pensioniert seit 2006, vorher Vorstand des Instituts für Volkswirtschaftslehre, Leiter des Instituts für Pflege- und Gesundheitssystemforschung an der Johannes Kepler Universität, Linz, Forschungsgebiete: angewandte Ökonometrie, Europäische Union, Familienökonomie, Gesundheitsökonomie

ECTS – The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System: All you need to know about it!

Mobility has become an essential feature of academic life. In order to facilitate student mobility in Europe the ECTS was developed within the context of the Erasmus student exchange program in 1989. Ten years later it was included in the Bologna declaration with its two cycles of Bachelor and Master degrees. Since then, there has been virtually no higher education document without reference to the ECTS.

ECTS is a student centered system of allocating points for academic work based on a student's workload with the goal to increase transparency and comparability between institutions and to facilitate mutual recognition.

A typical full-time student work load amounts to 1.500 – 1.800 hours per year which is translated into 60 ECTS credit points. Thus one ECTS-credit implies a total of 25 – 30 working hours. These include preparation, class room attendance, homework, reading, writing of papers, etc. – i.e. all the work involved to achieve the objective of the respective study programme. Assuming that a typical semester lasts 15 weeks, 50 to 60 hours of study work per week are required in order to complete 30 ECTS per term! Does this mean that the student is working 'overtime' every week or is she/he expected to continue studying during vacations?

The two-cycle Bologna process requires 180 - 240 ECTS for a Bachelor's and additionally 90 - 120 ECTS-points for a Master's degree implying a minimum of three years and an additional one and a half years of regular full-time study. The ECTS-system also suggests a grading scheme: the highest grade should be given to the top

10%, the lowest to the bottom 10% of all students passing the requirements, the rest being distributed along a 'curve'.

Post-graduate programmes are usually offered on a part-time basis. As a rule of thumb many institutions decide that 15 ECTS represent the maximum to be granted per term translating into 25 to 30 hours of studying per week which I consider a meaningful approach. To run a part-time post-graduate Master's programme over 4 semesters and granting 120 ECTS is in my view incorrect and inflationary. What kind of professional work does a participating student perform if she/he can devote an *additional 50 to 60 hours per week* to study at an advanced level?

References:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/doc/ectskey_en.pdf contains a short description; a comprehensive analysis is given by the Zgaga report <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Zgaga.pdf>.