

A short list of terms and definitions used in Tuning.

(From different Tuning publications, but mainly from “A Tuning Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles Including Programme Competences and Programme Learning Outcomes”, and with some comments of my own)

Ability: Acquired or natural capacity, competence, proficiency or talent that enables an individual to perform a particular act, job or task successfully.

Access: Certain qualifications convey the holder with the right to access specific qualifications at a particular education level within the education system in which the qualification was taken. For instance a first cycle degree usually provides access to second cycle studies.

Accreditation: Accreditation is the establishment of the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme or module of study by a designated competent authority.

Accreditation organisation: A designated competent authority which is legally entitled to accredit an institution, programme or module of study within the context of a national education system.

Assessment methods: The total range of methods used to evaluate the learner’s achievement in a course unit or module. Typically, these methods include written, oral, laboratory, practical tests/examinations, projects, performances and portfolios. The evaluations may be used to enable the learners to evaluate their own progress and improve on previous performance (formative assessment) or by the institution to judge whether the learner has achieved the learning outcomes of the course unit or module (summative assessment).

Attitude: Complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain ways.

Academic Awarding institution: A university or other higher education institution which awards degrees, diplomas, certificates or credits at tertiary level (doctorates) .

Benchmark: A standard, used for comparison. See also: Subject benchmark statements

Competences: Competences represent a dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, and ethical values. Fostering these competences is the object of all educational programmes. Competences are developed in all course units and assessed at different stages of a programme. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any degree course). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a programme.

Course unit: A self-contained, formally structured learning experience. It should have a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of competences to be obtained, and appropriate assessment criteria. Course units can have different numbers of credits.

Credential evaluation: Comparing and assessing foreign qualifications, facilitating the integration of national education systems.

Credit: The 'currency' used to measure student workload in terms of the time required to achieve specified learning outcomes. **See page 6 for more details.**

Degree Profile: A Degree Profile describes the specific characteristics of an educational programme or qualification in terms of learning outcomes and competences, following an agreed format.

Degree programme: A set of coherent educational components, based on learning outcomes, that are recognized for the award of a specific qualification through the accumulation of a specified number of credits and the development of specified competences

Descriptors: Generic statements of the outcomes of study for a qualification. They provide clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification, as defined in the National Frameworks, and make clear the nature of change between levels.

Diploma Supplement: The Diploma Supplement is an annex to the official degree/qualification designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the holder of the degree/qualification. It is based on the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. It facilitates international transparency and the academic/professional recognition of qualifications.

ECTS: is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility. ECTS is widely used in formal higher education and can be applied to other lifelong learning activities.

Generic competences: Generic Competences are also known as transferable skills or general academic skills. They are general to any degree programme and can be transferred from one context to another.

International recognition:

1. Methodologies and procedures to understand foreign qualifications and establish their comparability in view of further studies or employment.
2. A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the standing of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.

Key competences: Key Competences are the most important competences that the graduate will have obtained as a result of completing a specific degree programme.

Learner: Anyone who acquires new knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, or understanding, which may involve synthesizing different types of information.

Learning outcomes: A Learning Outcome may be described as a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes are expressed in terms of the level of competence to be obtained by the learner. They relate to level descriptors in national and European qualifications frameworks.

Level (cycle) descriptors: Generic statements describing the characteristics and context of learning expected at each level against which learning outcomes and assessment criteria can be reviewed.

Levels are understood to be a series of sequential steps to be taken by the learner (within a development continuum) expressed in terms of a range of generic outcomes, within a given programme. They can also reflect the expected outcomes of degree programme in terms of cycle level descriptors

Module: The term module has different meanings in different countries. In some it means a course unit; in others a module is a group of course units. In others again course units are made up of a number of modules. In Tuning a module is defined as a course unit or a combination of course units in a system in which each course unit carries the same number of credits or a multiple thereof. See also: course unit

National Qualifications Framework: A national framework of qualifications is a single description, at national level or level of an educational system, which is internationally understood. The framework describes all qualifications awarded in the system considered and relates them to each other in a coherent way. One very good example is that of the Republic of Ireland <http://www.nqai.ie/en/>

Programme Learning Outcomes: A coherent set of 15 to 20 statements expressing what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a degree programme.

Progression: (paths) the process which enables learners to pass from one level of competence acquisition to the next.

Qualification: Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognized programme of study

Qualification descriptors: Generic statements of the outcomes of study. They provide clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification often with reference to national levels.

Quality assurance: The process or set of processes adopted nationally and institutionally to ensure the quality of educational programmes and qualifications awarded.

Recognition networks

ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region.

NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union. Network of national centres providing information, advice and assessment of foreign qualifications. Created to help improve the academic recognition of international awards and facilitating the integration of national education systems.

Reference point: Non-prescriptive indicators that support the articulation of qualifications, learning outcomes or related

Skills A skill is the learned capacity to achieve pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both. Skills are often divided into general/generic and subject specific skills.

Student centred learning: An approach or system that supports the design of learning programmes which focus on learners' achievements, accommodate different learners' priorities and are consistent with reasonable students' workload (i.e. workload that is feasible within the duration of the learning programme). It accommodates for learners' greater involvement in the choice of content, mode, pace and place of learning.

Subject benchmark statements Subject benchmark statements set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject.

Subject specific competences: Competences related to a specific subject area.

Teacher centred learning: The transmission of information from a knowledge expert (teacher) to a relatively passive recipient (student/learner).

Thematic studies: A degree programme focusing on a particular subject or topic of interest. Thematic studies in higher education are of multi or interdisciplinary character.

Transcript: An official (e.g. certified) document which provides a complete summary of the student's academic record at that institution(s) leading to a qualification.