

# The Bologna Process: Further steps towards mutual recognition of diplomas

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# What you get:

- Bologna and recognition tools
- Qualifications frameworks: What, why and where?
- Recognition and learning outcomes.
- New implications for mutual transatlantic recognition
- Questions?



# The Bologna process

- Bologna process: Started 1999 with ministers from a number of European countries
- Overall aim: The creation of a European Higher Education Area in 2010:

**EHEA**

# Bologna process and recognition

- Bologna is about compatible educational systems, free mobility and recognition in the EHEA.
- Three tiered degree structure: 3+(1) 2 + 3
- Transparency of diplomas: Diploma supplement
- Common credit system: ECTS – 60 credits represent one year of study. 30 US Credits.
- Cooperation and common standards for quality assurance: New register with QA-agencies applying with standard guidelines of QA

# Bologna meeting Lisbon

- Mutual recognition of diplomas is an essential prerequisite of EHEA: No recognition = no EHEA
- The Lisbon Recognition Convention: European Council and UNESCO: Principles, procedures and good practice in recognition
- Lisbon Recognition Convention: Access to fair recognition + recognition unless the recognition authority can prove substantial differences between the foreign credentials and similar national credentials + recognition based on learning outcomes not on equivalence.
- Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications: More detailed descriptions of good recognition practice.

# Bologna and recognition: Qualifications frameworks

- Qualification frameworks: A systematic description of different types of degrees at different levels – Different educational levels/degrees are described in terms of learning outcomes and placed in a progressive structure
- Describes what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate after conferral of a degree
- QF's underpins lifelong learning by describing pathways through the educational system
- QF's increases transparency of qualifications by demonstrating which level the qualifications are placed in the QF.
- QF's represent a shift in educational philosophy: From input-centered to output-centered learning - from Professor rule to student-centered learning and from academia to labor market

# Different types of qualification Frameworks

- National Qualification Frameworks: NQF
- Overarching frameworks – transnational frameworks: The EHEA-framework and the European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- Sectoral frameworks
  
- Overarching framework: Translation device of qualifications
- Each country must refer their qualifications to the overarching frameworks
- EHEA-framework adopted in the Bologna-ministerial conference in Bergen 2005.

# EHEA-Framework

- Translation device of qualifications from all Bologna countries: All national higher education qualifications are being referred to the levels of the EHEA-framework
- 3 levels/cycles: Bachelor-, Master and Doctoral cycles First cycle refers to Bachelor level : 180-240 ECTS – credits. First cycle also encompasses a sub-degree level: I.e. Higher National Diploma.
- Second cycle: master level: 60-120 credits
- Third cycle doctoral level: Credits not specified
- Learning outcomes: The Dublin descriptors:



# Learning outcomes: The dublin descriptors

The Dublin descriptors were built on the following elements:

- knowledge and understanding;
- applying knowledge and understanding;
- making judgments;
- communications skills;
- learning skills.
- Each degree at each level described in terms of these learning outcomes
- I.e. what a bachelor candidate should be able to know, understand and do

# Learning outcomes

- Much broader description of qualifications: Not only related to the subject but also to broader skills and competences
- Learning outcomes are becoming the essential centre of curricula: Modules, units, whole qualifications described in learning outcomes, not only credits, exams, mandatory literature and so forth
- The Focus on learning outcomes also leads to new forms of exams: Students tested in communicative skills, ability to cooperate, integrate other subject areas and more
- Learning outcomes expressed at institutional level in curriculum, learning, teaching – at national level in NQF for expressions of degree levels and international level for comparison of learning outcomes for each degree level, thus increasing transparency, mobility and recognition

# Qualification frameworks and recognition

- EHEA-Framework: All Bologna-countries should by 2010 develop National Qualifications Framework
- All countries must refer their national qualifications to the levels in the EHEA-Framework: I.e. a French and Danish bachelor degree is referred to as a first cycle/level qualification in the EHEA-framework
- Not automatic recognition of degrees referred to same levels, but proving substantial differences between the qualifications will be very challenging for the recognition authorities.
- Quality assurance of referring national degrees to EHEA-framework: Self-certification process involving QA-experts and international experts

# Qualification frameworks and recognition

- Self certification process: A series of criteria and procedures, which shall demonstrate that the descriptions of learning outcomes and levels in the National Qualification Frameworks are compatible with the descriptions of learning outcomes and levels/cycles in the EHEA-framework
- At national level countries must ensure that national qualifications fulfill the learning outcomes described at each level/cycle
- A two steps procedure: 1: QA-agencies examine if a bachelor degree in chemistry from a specific university fulfills the learning outcomes described for bachelor degrees in the National Qualification Framework – In Denmark and many other countries this is done in the accreditation process.
- 2. Expert group with international experts examines the compatibility between the NQF and the EHEA-framework.

# Qualification Frameworks and recognition

## Summing up

- Qualification frameworks increase international transparency by placing qualifications in different levels in National Qualification Frameworks and referring the qualifications to levels/cycles in the international EHEA-framework.
- Reference to NQF and EHEA-levels will be expressed in the Diploma Supplement
- The self certification process and national QA-measures like accreditation should insure a trustworthy referral of qualifications to the Qualification Frameworks.

# Qualification Frameworks and Recognition

- Qualification Frameworks: Essential recognition tool and component in the development of a common European Higher Education Area in 2010.
- Challenges: Information to all users of QF's
- Many countries still in the process of describing their qualifications in learning outcomes
- National Qualification Frameworks, EHEA-framework, EQF: Transparency tools or muddy waters?

# Bologna Process and new implications for mutual transatlantic recognition

- Bologna Process and Qualification Frameworks making European degrees more compatible and more transparent
- The transatlantic recognition issues:
- Degree structures: 3 versus 4 years
- General ed. versus more European subject specific bachelor degrees
- Many Europeans claim that the general ed. component is fulfilled in upper secondary school in European systems
- Divergent educational philosophies

# Bologna Process and new implications for mutual transatlantic recognition

- The emergence of Qualification frameworks based on learning outcomes proves that:
- Most European degrees are not as subject specific and "nerdy" as sometimes perceived
- Students learn to communicate , cooperate, integrate knowledge and theories from other subject areas, perform concrete practical tasks and more other than subject specific knowledge and theory
- European universities can learn to understand the value of general ed. when they have described their own qualifications in broader learning outcomes – understanding and accepting the concept of broader bachelor degrees
- Use of learning outcomes explicit that the differences in educational philosophies perhaps are smaller than we/many thought.



## And finally

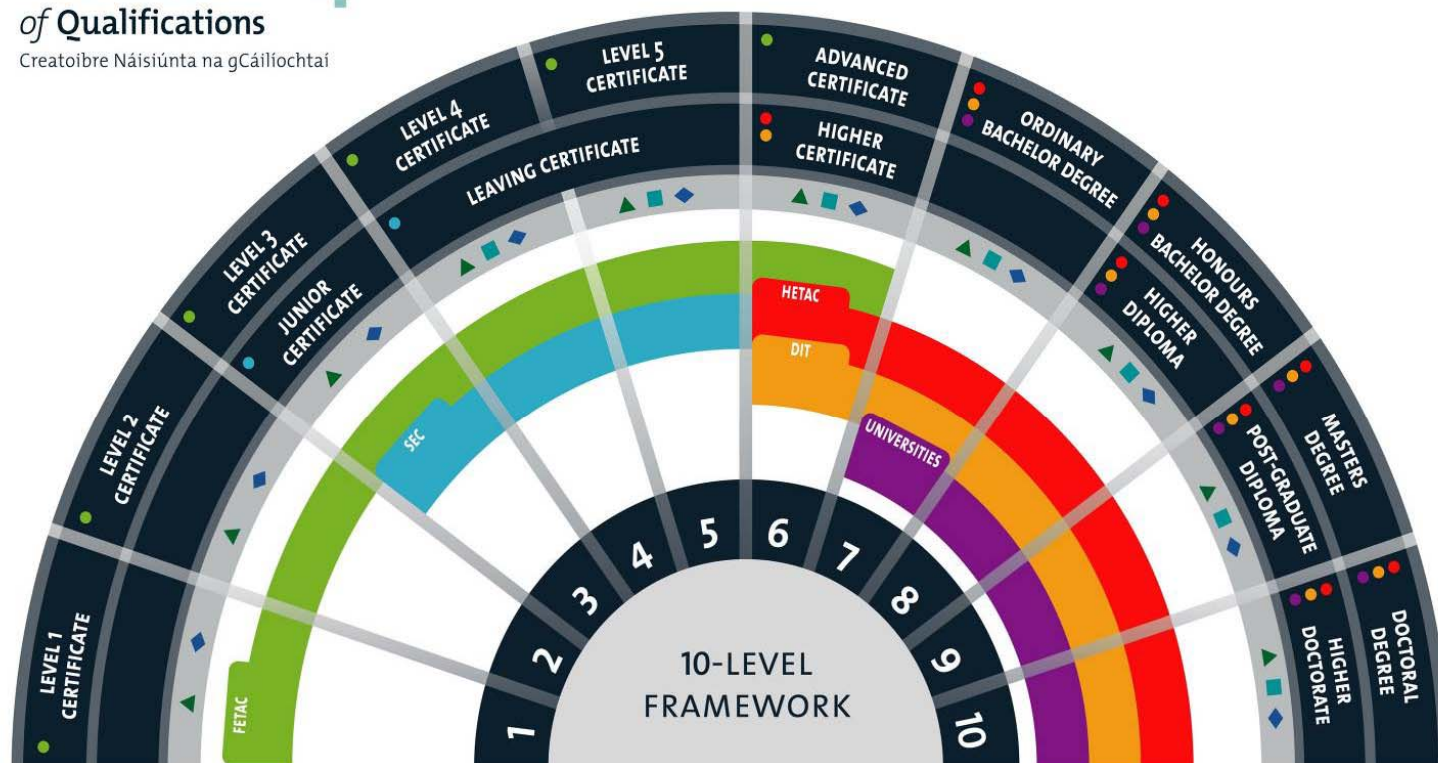
- EHEA 2010 represent a potent and attractive educational area
- The Bologna Process has provided many important recognition tools – the latest being the emphasis on National and International Qualification Frameworks
- The emphasis on learning outcomes in European qualifications proves that the differences between US and “European” educational philosophies are not overwhelming and can be bridged



Questions?

# Bologna meeting Lisbon

National  
Framework  
of Qualifications  
Creatoibre Náisiúnta na gCáilíochtaí



## KEY

- FETAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education & Science)
- HETAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities

## AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four types of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:

- Major Awards:** are the principal class of awards made at a level
- Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement