

ECTS-Points – What are they?

ECTS is the credit system for higher education used in the European Higher Education Area, involving all countries engaged in the Bologna Process.

ECTS credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes. Learning outcomes describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning.

Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

The estimation of workload must not be based on contact hours only (i.e. hours spent by students on activities guided by teaching staff). It embraces all the learning activities required to achieve the expected learning outcomes, including the time spent on independent work, compulsory work placements, preparation for assessment and the time necessary for the assessment. In other words, a seminar and a lecture may require the same number of contact hours, but one may require significantly greater workload than the other because of differing amounts of independent preparation by students.

This differs from the typical US or UK-based system where only actual lecture hours are calculated.

If your university is using a lecture hour system, you will find a table for converting lecture hours to ECTS in the next section.

60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a fulltime year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, whereby one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work.

ECTS Points – How to calculate equivalency

Calculating ECTS points often poses a problem for universities using a system where credit points are given exclusively for class attendance (and not self-study, projects etc. as per ECTS guidelines). The table below lists hour equivalencies that have proven to be typical for law and/or economics courses within the European Higher Education Area.

Under the EMLE guidelines, students receive 1 ECTS per 25 hours of effort spent on studies.

Type of course	Pure course time	Assumed additional time for projects, practical work, self-study and examinations	Total credit hours per week
Lectures	2-3 hours per week	2 hours per week	4-5
Undergraduate Seminars	2-3 hours per week	6 hours per week	8-9
Graduate Seminars	2-3 hours per week	8 hours per week	10-11
Tutorials	2-3 hours per week	4 hours per week	6-7

You are free to either calculate ECTS individually per student, based on the courses taken (certificate form page 4), or to confirm that as per your university requires at least 1500 credit hours (= 60 ECTS points as calculated by ECTS standards) to complete the mandatory courses during one year of studies (certificate form page 5).

Example: A student in a one-year masters course using only contact hours takes

In the first semester (25 weeks):

- two lectures (2 hours class time),
- two graduate seminars (3 hours class time)
- one tutorial (2 hours class time).

The student could be certified as having an ECTS equivalent of:

- Lectures: 2 hours class time + 2 hours preparation * 25 weeks = 100 ECTS hours per lecture; 200 ECTS hours total for lectures
- Seminars: 3 hours class time + 8 hours preparation time * 25 weeks = 275 ECTS hours per seminar; 550 ECTS hours total for seminars
- Tutorial: 2 hours class time + 4 hours preparation time * 25 weeks = 150 ECTS hours

for a total of 900 ECTS hours.

Since the EMLE calculates 25 ECTS hours per credit point, the student could be certified as having received 36 ECTS credit point equivalents for the semester.