

PART ONE

A piece of information about Implementation of the Bologna process at Charmo University

1. Introduction

Charmo University is a public university in Kurdistan, which works under the Ministry of Higher Education. By the decree of Ref No 27 on 19/10/2014 and the ministerial decree No N/1286, Charmo University was declared open on 5/11/2014.

At first, it was affiliated with the University of Sulaimani, which consisted of three colleges: College of Education, College of Basic Education and College of Political Sciences. Then it became independent to meet the needs of Kurdistan Region. Currently, the University has the following colleges:

✚ College of Education and Languages including:

- Special Education
- General Science
- Kurdish Language
- Arabic Language for Foreign Speakers, and
- English Language

✚ College of Public Administration and Natural Resource Management including:

- Public Administration
- Oil, Gas & Energy Management
- Accounting

✚ College of Medical and Applied Sciences including:

- Medical Laboratory Science
- Pharmaceutical Chemistry
- Applied Physics
- Applied Computer.

 Charmo Center for Scientific Research and Training including:

- Language Center
- Charmo University Center for Anfal and Genocide
- Research Center for Natural Sciences (Chemistry, Biology and Physics)
- Computer Center.

Charmo University is the first public university in Kurdistan that has started implementing the Bologna Process in 2017. Bologna Process ensures comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications. It follows a semester style and credit collection (ECTS) process. The Ministry of Higher Education in Kurdistan supports the process to reform the system of higher education in the region. In accordance with a ministerial decree by the ministry of higher education and scientific research code 7 dated 7/1/2019, the University of Charmo officially declared the implementation of Bologna Process in all of its colleges and departments.

Meanwhile, as a step toward the implementation of the process and in the light of the decree issued by the ministry of higher education and scientific research/office of finance and administration/ managerial decree no 417 dated 9/1/2018 relating to the opening of Directorate of Bologna Process Evaluation, the University announced the opening of directorate of Bologna Process Evaluation in the university's scientific blueprints. The aim of this office is to aid and monitor the Bologna Process in the education system of the university. Moreover, the office provides support and guidance to the students and staff of Charmo University.

Since the University has made a decision toward reform in its higher education system it has faced many issues and challenges due to the existence of a huge gap between the old and new process. However, the University has worked very hard and tried to find reasonable solutions for most of the obstacles by providing lots of support to both academics and students.

Along the same line, Charmo University also supports and helps all other universities in signing and implementing the Bologna Process in their education system. On December 10, 2018, Charmo University held a workshop organized by the ministry of higher education and scientific research entitled “implementation of the Bologna Process at Charmo University” for Kurdistan universities. The participants praised the workshop. Due

to this, the ministry of higher education and scientific research issued an appreciation letter to the staff of Charmo University.

2- Program guidelines

The University follows a semesterial system in which education program year is divided into two semesters labeled as the Fall semester and Spring semester which are followed by a short semester. Students' admission happens in the Fall semester. The shortest period of study is four years (i.e. eight semesters). The four years are divided into one Foundation year and three academic years, which will be explained at the end of this part.

The modules of each semester are selected by the departments in support with student's workload, which determines credits of each module, except for those modules, which are assigned by the college/faculty council. According to the Bologna process of Charmo University, a credit requires 25 hours of student learning time (SLT) and the total required credits are 240 credits according to the type of the program. For a student to receive a bachelor's degree, he/she needs to complete 60 credits in the Foundation year and 180 credits in the three academic years. In other words, a student has to accumulate 30 credits per semester, which depend on the program type of the modules in the departments.

Students' workload is accounted for and the student's assessment in each module is based on the students' workloads in the course. The evaluation of each course is governed by the coursework in which the grades must not be less than 60%, which is added to 40% of the final examination. Coursework can come in the form of assignments, quizzes, presentations and participation in the final examination that is done at the end of the semester and evaluating students' performances is represented in letters.

The lowest passing grade is "C" which equals 60. The students who fail to earn less than C are required to repeat the course in the next semester. Students can improve their grades when the grade is "C+" or less, and in accordance with college/faculty's rules and regulations, students can withdraw from a semester.

Students must finish all the courses and fulfill all the requirements of the program, which were predetermined by the college/faculty in order to become a bachelor's degree holder.

3- Foundation Program

In order *to join* the academic years of his/her undergraduate study, it is imperative for the student to collect 60 credits in the Foundation year. The Foundation guideline is clarified below in detail;

3.1 Preface

- Foundation program is a preparatory year, which is studied, in the first year of the undergraduate study. Basically, the Foundation year is a bridge for students to pass to the academic year.
- The aim of the Foundation year is to improve students' English language skills and computer skills as well as some courses related to university activities.
- Each department in any college/faculty studies a course per semester. In this semester, students are introduced to the terminologies, which are necessary for understanding the department.
- Students' transcript illustrates the courses of the Foundation year and their credits are accounted.

3.2 Learning Period

- According to the new education system at Charmo University, the first year is the Foundation year, which includes two semesters.
- In the Foundation year, the University can open a short semester to aid the students in joining the academic year.
- The minimum period in the Foundation year is one semester and the maximum is four semesters.
- A student can complete the Foundation year in one semester if the student meets the following criteria:
  - The student scored 5.5 in IELTS.
  - The student scored 500 in TOEFL or 58 in TOEFL IBT.
  - In case of meeting points A & B, which are related to the student's language skills, the student can study the remaining courses in one semester, since s/he will be exonerated from studying the English skills.

3.3 The Arranged Courses

- The courses, which are studied in the Foundation year, are decided and selected by the Board of the Foundation in cooperation with scientific committees of the college/faculty.
- The courses are required to be studied by the students and the students are required to pass in all of the courses of the Foundation year.

4- Academic session

1. An academic year is normally divided into two semesters: Fall semester and Spring semester. Each semester includes 13 to 16 weeks. This is divided into 12 weeks of studying followed by a week break after the midterm examination, a week before the final exam during which there won't be any classes and 2 to 3 weeks are devoted for the midterm and final exams.
2. The University can open a short semester at the end of the Spring semester. The duration of the short semester and the examinations is eight weeks. The short semester starts in the Summer break.
3. The short semester is not part of the academic program and there is no learning week distribution for those short semester participants.

Note: The length of the weeks in the academic year will be made by the university and it will be shown in the academic calendar.

5- Credit system

- i. Each module has its own credits and crediting the modules would be designated by the departments. Crediting the modules is based on the implementation of the Bologna Process requirements which state that 30 credits should be assigned for each semester and 240 credits collected for the eight semesters.

ii. Workload definition

A workload is the time which students need to learn and master the course. Workload circulates around students' attendance in class and extra-curricular activities such as studying, preparation, writing reports, assignments, Q and A, quizzes, presentations, etc.

iii. ECTS definition

Students' workload is measured by ECTS. In the European countries, it is necessary for students to collect 60 ECTS in an academic year. At Charmo University every 25 hours of student learning time equals one credit and the total of required credits is 240 credits (see figure 1).

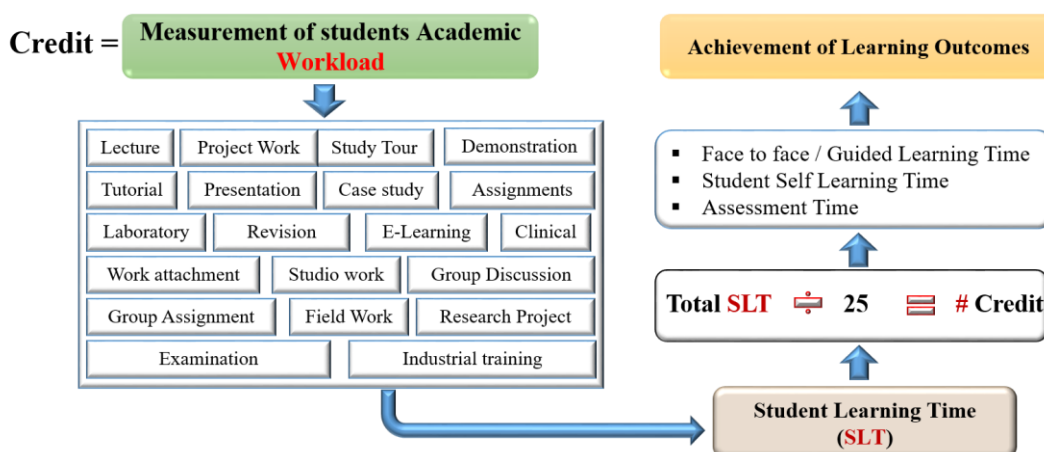


Figure 1: ECTS Measurement

iv. Credit in each course

Each course has its own credit value which shows the type and objective of the course. Table 1 demonstrates the method of credits calculation.

Table 1: ECTS calculation for each course module

Module Code: -----		Module Name: -----	
Face to Face Learning (Hours)	Lectures	Attending	24
		Pre & Post-Preparation	36
	Tutorial	Attending	0
		Pre & Post-Preparation	0
Laboratory (Hours)	Practical	Attending	24
		Pre & Post-Preparation	24
Assessments (Hours)	Continuous Assessments	Assignments	4
		Quiz + Test	2
		Preparation	6
	Presentation	Presentation	0.5
		Preparation	2
	Examinations	Midterm + Final	6
		Preparation	14
	Others		8
Module Total SLT (Hours)			151
Module Total Credit (SLT /25)			6

6- Grading system

1. Achieving grade mirrors students' performance in the course. The relationship between marks, levels and grading is explained in table No. 9.
2. Basically, C is the least required mark to pass in any modules.

7- Assessment

▪ Attendance

1. Students are required to attend all the learning activities such as lectures including theoretical and practical, studio, fieldwork, etc. which should not be lower than 80% in the learning activities. This include AO and CC for each semester. If a student did not attend the learning activities, teachers should be notified, and they need to find the reason behind students' absence.
2. Teachers are required to report to the college/faculty, if the student's absence in learning activities reaches 20%.
3. When the college/faculty receives the report from the teachers, it is highly important for the college/faculty to give written notification (warning) to the student.
4. If the student's participation in the classes is less than 80% without any convenient excuse, the student will be banned from joining other activities. The student will not receive any assessment process and s/he will be given zero. Thus, he will fail in the required course.
5. The college/faculty hands out a written warning to the student in relation to point (4).

▪ Assessment system

1. Course assessment is determined by coursework, midterm exams, final exams and other methods which the college/faculty decides and approves.
2. Assessment of practical courses and the final year project rely on a system that the college/faculty selects and approves.
3. The marking scale is 0-100. Students should attain at least 60 to pass each course during each semester. The final exams weight 40% of the total mark of each course while the remaining 60% is distributed on coursework, reports, presentations, midterm exams and other class activities.

4. If the assessment of a course depends entirely on coursework, the college/faculty should be notified, and they should approve it.

8- Academic standing

Students are assessed based on two criteria: grading point assessment (GPA) and credit grading point assessment (CGPA).

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{\text{Total of accumulated grade in a semester}}{\text{Total of accounted for credits in a semester}}$$

$$\text{CGPA} = \frac{\text{total of accumulated grade in the entire semester}}{\text{Total of accounted for credits in the entire semester}}$$

PART TWO

The impact of Bologna process on higher educational process at the University (Classical System vs Bologna Process in Iraq)

Needless to say, the advancement of any nation reflects on its education system. If a country intends to progress, the first step that is required to take is reforming the education system, since education prepares the young generation for the future in order to support and develop their nation. It is a well-known fact that Iraq is infamous for being a corruptive country in Asia. Generally, the key reason behind this is education, because nothing has changed in terms of education in the past eight decades. Same modules, same curricula, same examination procedures are still followed in schools and universities which were used eight decades ago. One can say that Iraq works hard to prepare its generation not for the future but for the past.

Recently some universities in Kurdistan have started implementing the Bologna process. One of those universities is Charmo University, which is in Chamchamal near Sulaymaniyah. The university has three colleges. The College of Education and Language consists of five departments, which are General Science, Kurdish Language, Arabic Language, Special Education and English Language. College of Medical and Applied Sciences has Medical Laboratory Science, Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Applied Computer and Applied Physics Departments. College of Public Administration and Natural Resource Management consists of Public Administration, Oil, Gas Energy Management and Accounting Departments.

This report aims to shed some light on the comparison between the implementation of the classical system versus Bologna process at Charmo University by asking the opinions of teachers who taught in both systems.

The implementation of classical system in Kurdistan has begun with the opening of the University of Sulaimani in 1968. It was then the first time when Kurdish high school graduates were introduced to the system. Basically, the system depends on using the old techniques in giving lectures and assessing the students. Until post 2003 teachers did not

use and even were not familiarized with using technologies in class. The sources and curricula were in Arabic in almost all colleges. Teachers did not update their knowledge. The knowledge, which was taught at schools and universities, was mainly taken from the school system of the developed countries. For example, the notion of earth is the center of earth is still taught in schools and universities. The traditional system follows a yearly style. In addition to this, the passing grade is 50 out of 100. The assessment structure is based on having two exams before the final and each is out of 20 and the final is out 60. Assignments presentations and quizzes are not much considered. In other words, there are few marks on class attendance, preparing presentations and doing assignments. An assistant lecturer at Charmo, states, in the traditional system it is not possible to see the learning outcomes. She notes that students can easily fail themselves and work really hard in the final to score 50/60. Moreover, the Head of Applied Physics Department at Charmo believes that the old system demotivates students and teachers in the education process. Students' efforts will not be graded. Thus, students find no meaning and joy in studying and reading more.

Bologna process is implemented in most of the developed countries. It is based on a semester style and credit collection (ECTS). The system divides the academic year into two semesters (Fall and Spring). In each semester, lecturers are required to assign students to assignments and more readings. The process evaluates students learning on two different occasions: midterm and final. In each semester, students study different modules, which means they are engaged with different modules and learning styles.

To compare the traditional system and the Bologna process, it is worth noting that in the Bologna process everything related to learning is graded such as class attendance, presentations, assignments and quizzes. The learning intensity is not on the final but it is on the period before the final examination. Students can collect lots of grades before final exams.

A lecturer from the English Department at Charmo points out that teachers have chances to evaluate the learning outcomes and students work hard to learn more by preparing presentations and submitting their assignments. She says the Bologna process gives the students the feeling that they are not different from European undergraduates. Regarding teachers, she thinks that this process is suitable for both teachers and students, so they follow the same path and have a clear picture of what they are supposed to do.

However, in the old system, each student is the subject of different teaching pedagogies. There are too many holidays, which put barriers in front of the teachers in term of studying more. On the contrary, the Bologna process only follows the international holidays such as the New Year, Christmas day, etc.

In short, it can be said that great dissimilarities exist between the Bologna process and the classical system of education. Although now it is the second year that Charmo University implements the Bologna process, many teachers are optimistic about it. They can detect the differences between the Bologna process students and the classical system students. Outcomes of the process look more promising to the teachers who implement the process. While it might be too soon to declare the success of the process in Kurdistan and particularly at Charmo, many teachers believe that this process can revolutionize the education system in Kurdistan. One can say that the Bologna process might be a solution that the country has been seeking for many years because it can produce well-educated young learners that can serve and lead the nation like many countries in Europe.

In the meantime, for the process to succeed, it should be supported by other countries that have experience in the Bologna process. Charmo needs financial and educational support of other countries. By providing support to the process, Kurdish people will have access to the same educational rights as others. Hopefully, having the same educational rights will trigger the young learners to think about building the country and solving its problems rather than escaping from them.

End of the Report