



# From policy to practice

Robert Wagenaar, Dutch BE,  
University of Groningen, the Netherlands



# Workshop Grading

30 Years ECTS = 30 years debate about Grading Scale / Table

## A REMINDER

Why do we have grades in the first place?: Instrument to indicate the level of performance !

## Situation in Europe and beyond

Challenge: Completely different grading cultures

## International mobility implies recognition

Challenge: Recognition of credits and of GRADES

## Principle:

Same rules for student with and without mobility period

According to ECTS: *A priory* recognition (based on agreed learning agreement) – Credits and Grades (= accepting judgement of staff 'host' institution)



# Workshop Grading

## What is grading?

**Grading** in EDUCATION is the **process of applying standardized measurements of varying levels of achievement** in a course (unit). Grades can be assigned as letters (for example A through F), as a range (for example 1 to 6), as a percentage of a total number of questions answered correctly, or as a number out of a possible total (for example out of 20 or 100)

### **Grades can be based on numerical and qualitative definitions:**

- Quantitative / Percentage: Ranking of students in the class / programme / faculty / university
- Qualitative Judgement / Descriptors: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, Sufficient

### **Why is grading perceived as being important?**

- Offers evidence on how well a particular (set of) topic(s) is understood.
- Indicative for choices to be made: type of employment / further education
- Applying for grants and funding

**Only fair that complete set and all types of performance are measured and taken into account**



# Workshop Grading

## European Commission viewpoint as expressed in **ECTS Users' Guide 2015**:

Due to different cultural and academic traditions, European educational systems have developed not only **different national grading scales but also different ways of using them** within the same country, in different subject areas or institutions. While it is essential to acknowledge these differences, it is also important to **make them transparent** within the European Higher Education Area, so that grades awarded in all countries, subject areas or institutions can be **properly understood and correctly compared**.

Mobile students have **the right to fair treatment and to transparency** of their grades when credits are transferred from one institution to another, as **access to further studies**, grants or other benefits may depend on their level of performance. Transparency of performance levels is equally important for graduates **applying for a job** in their own or in another country.



# Workshop Grading

**30 Years of ECTS:** 30 years of debate about Grading / Grading Scale / Grading Table

1990-1992	1993-2004	2004-2009	2009-today
Percentages	Percentages + Qualifications	Percentages	Percentages
1 = best 25% 2 = next 25% 3 = next 25% 4 = final 25% of successful students	A = best 10% = Excellent B = next 25% = Very Good C = next 30% = Good D = next 25% = Satisfactory E = final 10% = Sufficient (of successful students) FX = Fail F = Fail	A = best 10% B = next 25% C = next 30% D = next 25% E = final 10% (of successful students) FX = Fail F = Fail	Grade distribution according to national system, expressed in % of successful students (based on defined reference group: ISCED-F classification)

The puzzle that has not been solved yet ?



# Workshop Grading

Europe and beyond: **Completely different grading cultures**

EUROCULTURE ECTS GRADING CONVERSION TABLE December 2016

Deusto		Göttingen		Groningen		Krakow		Olomouc		Strasbourg		Udine		Uppsala	
Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%
10-9	16.7	1	9.3	10-9	12.5					20-16	6,4	30CL-30	15.3	A (VG)	17.5
8	31.1	1.3	17.8	8	42.6	5	26	A	38	15,9-14	45,7	29-28	20.5	B (VG)	7.5
		1.7	21.7											B (G)	35
		2	13.8												
7	39.4	2.3-2.7	24.7	7	34	4	25	C	19.4	13.9-12	42.6	25-22	28.8	C (G)	29.5
		3	5.4												
5-6	11.8	3.3-3.7	5.5	6	10.9	3.0	17	E	7.9	11,9-10	5,3	21-18	12.3	D (G)	8.5
		4	1.8											E (G)	2
Total	99		100		100		100		100		100		100		100

The example of the Erasmus Mundus Master Programme EURO-CULTURE: Society, Politics and Culture in a Global Context (120 ECTS)

Table based on present ECTS model



# Workshop Grading

**Example of EURO CULTURE** illustrates how complicated and sensitive the issue is !

EGRACONS offers solution of part of the problem, but not in all cases

- ❖ Highest grade ranges from 6.4% (France) to 38% Czech Republic
- ❖ How to make Swedish Grades compatible ?
- ❖ Highest grade offers in Poland / Czech Republic implies after conversion 8 NL (according to EGRACONS); how to convert a 9 or 10 NL in a fair way into Polish or Czech System ?
- ❖ How to decide the 'Judicium' : Cum Laude / Summa Cum Laude ?
  - ❖ Additional information required in case of insufficiently discriminating scales?
  - ❖ Leave out the grades obtained abroad?



# Workshop Grading

## How to proceed ? Three possible ways forward ?

### Policy 1:

**DO NOT CONVERT!** Accept national / institutional grades as they are! Include grades and distribution table(s) of the countries / HE institutions where student has studied in her / his Diploma Supplement. [Convert only to calculate 'Judicium']  
(The grade distribution table should be part of the Transcript of Records)

### Policy 2:

**CONVERT** grades in national grading system (by using EGRACONS or other method), but **INCLUDE also original grade** according to national / institutional system of 'host' institution for TRANSPARENCY purposes. Decide whether to include additional national / institutional distribution table.

### Policy 3:

**CONVERT** grades in national system (by using EGRACOMS or other method).



# Workshop Grading

## Example Diploma Supplement University of Groningen

### 4.4 Grading scheme and grade distribution



university of  
groningen

DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT

The Dutch grading system, used from elementary through to university education is the 1 to 10 scale given in the following table, in which 10 is the highest grade, 6 the minimum pass, and 1 the lowest grade. The grade 10 is rarely awarded.

#### The grading table

The grade distribution table below has been developed for the specific degree programme which is mentioned, calculated over the past three years. It indicates the percentage of students who gained the grades mentioned in the transcript of records (under 4.3) and gives a clear indication of the student's performance.

Dutch grading marks and percentages calculated over the past three years

For: *Bachelor of Arts in Geschiedenis*

Dutch grade:	6	7	8	9	10
Percentage:	40,3%	36,4%	18,8%	4,3%	0,2%

### 4.5 Overall classification of the qualification

#### Pass

The qualification 'pass' is granted to the bachelor degree when the weighted average Dutch grade for all examinations is between 6 and 8.

The qualification 'cum laude' can be granted to the bachelor degree when the weighted average Dutch grade for all examinations is at least an 8 (not rounded up).



# Workshop Grading

## A fourth policy? Offering additional information: GPA

Calculate Grade Point Average and include this in Diploma Supplement ?

USA System based on Carnegie Model: Credit (Hours) = Contact hours

### GPA Calculator

Course	Credit Hours	Grade
1	4	A
2	3	B+
3	2	C
4	4	D
5	2	A-
6	2	B-
7	3	C-

Clear 2.59

**NOT HELPFUL – Misleading Transparency**

*Quote website University of Utrecht:*

### **GRADE POINT AVERAGE SUBSTITUTED BY GRADING TABLES**

Until September 1st 2017, Utrecht University published a Grade Point Average (GPA) to provide help institutions abroad to interpret UU-grades. Many Anglo-Saxon universities use this four point scale to express their weighted average grade. The GPA always needs clarification. The standards according to which the GPA is calculated differ between (international) universities.



# Workshop Grading

## **IN CONCLUSION :**

**Show the world and your partners what good practice is!**

Ask the same in return ! It will pay off !

- Include grade distribution percentages and table(s) in your Transcripts of Records and Diploma Supplement
- Offers crucial service (necessity) for your students and graduates. Compensate for 'negative effect' of NL conservative grading !
- Recognise grades— besides credits - obtained abroad : avoid twin-track approach



# Workshop Grading

Thank you for your attention !

Questions ?