Kingdom of Eswatini

Policy and Guidelines on Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

ESWATINI
HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL

Policy and Guidelines on Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

"To serve as a reference tool for allocating credits and supporting students' mobility within and across institutions, programmes and sub-frameworks of the ESQF."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 8

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAT	-	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CV	-	Credit Value
CH	-	Contact Hour
EGCSE	-	Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education
ESQF	-	Eswatini Qualifications Framework
EU	-	European Union
HEI	-	Higher Education Institution
HIGCSE	-	Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IGCSE	-	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
NQF	-	National Qualifications Framework
QAM	-	Quality Assurance Mechanisms
QAS	-	Quality Assurance Standards
RPL	-	Recognition of Prior Learning
TVET	-	Technical Vocational Education and Training

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions provide relevance to Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) guidelines within the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF).

a. **Degree:** Is a research based qualification awarded by a Higher Education Institution (HEI) upon successful completion of study at a specific level of the ESQF in a chosen field of study.

b. **Accreditation:** A formal decision on the quality of a higher education institution, programs or facilities on the basis of evidence that framework levels, subject standards are compatible and in compliance with approved Quality Assurance Standards (QAS).

c. **Comparability:** The degree to which a qualification can be assumed to be equal or related to the other.

d. **Competency:** A set of defined behaviours that denote the capacity to do and are an indicator or learning.

e. **Contact Hour:** Class time(contact), usually equivalent to 50 hours of active contact/instruction.

f. **Credit Value:** An acceptable mechanism that recognizes the quantum of learning for a qualification.

g. **Course:** Constitute of a set of knowledge, skills and aptitudes that are a major component of a curriculum.

h. **Credit:** A unit of academic measurement of educational value. Or a "currency" providing a measure of learning outcomes achieved in notional hours at a given level. One (1) credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning.

i. **Credit accumulation:** A set of agreed specifications and procedures, which denote the number of credits that a learner has gained by successfully completing learning outcomes.

j. **Credit Points:** The actual time in credits it takes to complete a program or a module. Credit points are generated by dividing notional hours by 10.

k. **Learner:** A person admitted into a program in a HEI with the sole purpose of acquiring knowledge, skills and competences leading to the award of qualification in the ESQF

l. **Level Descriptors:** Are broad, generic, qualitative statements of learning outcomes that will be achieved at a specific level of the qualifications framework.

m. **Horizontal transfer of credits:** This means the recognition and articulation of accumulated credits from the sending institution/department at the same level as the destination institution/department within and between subframes of ESQF.

n. **Learning Outcome:** A statement on what a learner should understand and can do upon completion of a learning sequence or study period.

o. **Level:** The location of a particular qualification within the ESQF.

p. **Notional Hours:** An estimate of time in hours an average learner would take to achieve learning outcome (usually computed as 1credit=10 notional hours)

q. **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** An assessment that involves assessing skills, knowledge or competences gained outside a formal learning system, but which can be awarded credits.

r. **Programme:** An approved curriculum composed of a series of courses/modules leading to an award of a qualification.

s. **Qualification:** An award that is granted by a Higher Education Institution upon successful completion of the required number of credits, including the ability to demonstrate competence.

t. **Qualifications Framework:** A detailed structure showing the various qualifications, their descriptors, credits and level. Each level on the ESQF denotes a level of complexity.

u. **Vertical transfer of credits:** This means the recognition and articulation of accumulated credits from the sending institution/department at a different level as the destination institution/department across subframes of the ESQF.

CHAPTER I

Context

In most developed and developing countries, higher education has undergone and continues to undergo rapid transformation. Transformations in higher education have been a result of two important factors; the ever-changing demands of the job market and the increasing desire to ensure and assure quality in the design, delivery and regulation of higher education programmes.

The above pressures have increased the demand for harmonized delivery systems, as well as the need to establish standards to be used as a reference for those charged with delivery and regulation of higher education.

Efforts to harmonize higher education systems have met several challenges, including but not limited to; variations in credits allocated to programmes, different approaches to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), different quality assurance mechanisms, as well as different entry requirements into higher education.

In Eswatini, like many developing economies, developments in higher education are still new, yet emphasis on quality higher education is increasingly becoming significant. Aware of the need to regulate higher education, the ESwatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) was established in 2015 to regulate higher education provision in the country. Its mandate is to develop and implement a quality assurance system for higher education, covering among other areas, registration, accreditation, institutional audits, quality promotion and setting of standards.

Although efforts have been made to harmonize the various components of higher education in the Kingdom of Eswatini, certain components of the sector are still fragmented and working independently of each other.

It is evident that presently, credit allocation in institutions of higher learning does not take a uniform pattern. This can be attributed to the lack of a standardized policy on credit allocation, credit transfer and accumulation, including the recognition of prior learning. Public Institutions (universities and colleges) currently allocate between 2-3 credits per module, while private, cross border HEIs especially from South Africa and Botswana allocate between 10-20 credits to study modules. Others, presently use the conventional notional hours to determine the amount of time to allocate to learning/ teaching activities.

Another key observation is the fact that, the mobility of learners across HEIs is high among those who wish to transfer from one HEI to another at the same ESQF level(horizontal) or those who want to transfer credits from a lower ESQF level to a higher ESQF level (vertical). The desire to vertically, horizontally and probably reverse credits has raised a plethora of problems. First, in the absence of "a common currency" (credits), it is difficult to ascertain the credibility of credits being transferred from one HEI to the other. Secondly, in the absence of well-articulated quality assurance mechanisms at institutional level, pitching learners at a certain level in the destination programme, somewhat takes a subjective stance.

Worse still, is the issue of pitching learners who have graduated from Eswatini HEIs at lower levels of Qualifications Frameworks in neighboring countries, when they seek to advance their studies. A case in point is the issue of learners who complete 4 years pursuing their first degree in Eswatini, but are pitched at level 7 instead of level 8 when they want to advance for Masters in South African universities.

In most HEIs in the Kingdom of Eswatini, quality assurance mechanisms/systems are slowly taking shape, but not grounded enough to ensure water proof educational offerings that meet the required Quality Assurance Standards(QAS). Mistrust among providers of higher education, especially between public and private providers of higher education in a way, plays an important role in creating demand for standards and acceptable procedures on credit allocation, recognition and transfer.

Importantly, Eswatini is cognisant of the importance of education and skills development in supporting national development goals, which include accelerated growth and global competitiveness. It accepts that education and skills development, as embraced in human capital development, is a critical pillar for growth, poverty eradication and social cohesion.

To achieve the above, the government of Eswatini through the Eswatini Higher Education Council is mandated to provide guidelines, approve and regulate higher education in the Kingdom. The implementation of such a mandate is structured around major aspects of the ESQF.

As stated in the ESQF (2020), the Eswatini Qualifications Framework was developed to respond to;
- Poor internal relevance – poor vertical and horizontal articulation of programmes limit the pathway arrangements required to facilitate trainee movement across levels of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and between TVET and higher education.

- Poor credibility and quality of existing qualifications and training programmes – there is a need to provide a stronger basis for the understanding, comparison and recognition of national and foreign qualifications.

- Lack of coherence and fragmented nature of qualifications systems – there is need to address the lack of consistency and reliability among qualifications.

- The need for recognition of non-formal acquired skills and facilitation of their integration into the formal system.

The above cannot be effectively responded to in the absence of guidelines for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT). ESHEC opines that, effective monitoring of higher education system requires harmonised guidelines to ensure consistency and objectivity in the design of programmes, recognition of prior learning, accumulation and transfer of credits.

CHAPTER 2

Policy and principles for CAT

2.1 Policy statement

Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) is committed to ensuring a fair, transparent and robust regulatory framework for higher education in the Kingdom of Eswatini. This has/is being made possible through the development of guidelines aimed at providing a framework for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

ESHEC believes that CAT guidelines are a recipe for attaining quality education for all learners irrespective of their social economic background.

ESHEC strives to maintain transparent quality standards in the Kingdom of Eswatini where programme design, learning outcomes, learning materials are designed in a manner that ensures learning and the acquisition of level competences.

Important to note, these guidelines are supposed to be interpreted during the design and development of learning outcomes/ materials, teaching and learning as well as in the process of programme evaluation and review.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the Kingdom are encouraged to familiarize with the guidelines and build them into programme design, design of instructional materials, teaching, assessment of learning as well as in the accumulation and transfer of credits (horizontally or vertically).

To ensure and assure the quality of education in the Kingdom of Eswatini, effort will be made to support HEIs to adhere to CAT guidelines.

2.2 Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:
a) Serve as a blue print for the development and review of programmes using learning outcomes and credits.
b) Act as a reference tool for allocating credits and supporting student's mobility within and across institutions, programmes, sub-frameworks of the ESQF as well as guide in the evaluation and transfer of learners from other countries.
c) Create harmony and transparency in credit weighting, accumulation and transfer.

d) Align HEIs response in determining learning time as well as the volume of learning required to complete learning.

2.3 Policy Scope

Credit Accumulation and Transfer policy guidelines apply to;

- Programmes accredited by ESHEC.
- All Higher Education and, Technical and Vocational qualifications on the ESQF.
- Individuals who may want to transfer their credits to HEIs in Eswatini.
- Curriculum design.
- Stakeholders who support higher and TVET education in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

It should be noted that this policy aims at supplementing existing Quality Assurance Mechanisms (QAM) to support in assuring quality of higher education. Stakeholders should embrace it as an internal guide to quality assurance. Deviation from stipulations in this document will result into:

a) Decline to approve/accredit a programme(s) by ESHEC.

b) Accreditation of a programme(s) being revoked.

c) Suspending the programme

d) Warning to the public not to seek admission into the institution flouting guidelines.

2.4 Principles for CAT

These policy guidelines are anchored on the principles of the Eswatini Qualifications Framework. The guidelines are aimed at ensuring harmony and transparency between and among sub-frameworks of the ESQF. These guidelines are a reference point, and not prescriptive (in addition to other important documents) for HEI administrators, educators and stakeholders in the design, development and monitoring of educational activities in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The ultimate goal is to promote learning, facilitate learner mobility by minimizing duplication of learning and at the same time build confidence and trust among and between providers of higher education. This policy takes cognizance of the following principles for CAT;

a) Learner-centered

Learning outcomes rather than the number of modules/courses taken should be used as a measure to determine the nature and quality of learning that took place. All procedures designed to support learning, including curriculum

design, and material development should be fair, transparent and most importantly easy to use. Since learning outcomes determine the extent of learning, effort should be made to promote mobility and minimize duplication of learning that has taken place ("learners do not learn what they already know")

b) Quality Assurance

HEIs internal processes should be open to rigorous internal and regulatory audits and assurance mechanisms. It is the responsibility of every HEI to create and establish auditable quality assurance processes and implement them as per stipulations of the regulatory authority (ESHEC, Ministry of Education and Training).

c) Transparency

Higher Education Institutions should develop guidelines for accepting or rejecting requests for transfer of credits. Processes or mechanisms followed at arriving at a decision should be fair, equitable, and in line with programme standards, ESQF guidelines as well as internal institutional guidelines. Both, the applicant as well as the sending institution should be able to follow and understand the process.

d) A Cooperative approach

The bedrock of CAT is that learners should be allowed to transfer acquired credits provided such credits were acquired and accumulated within a transparent, learning outcome-based system. As such, institutions should ensure commitment to guidelines as well as support each other in terms of information exchange and other forms of quality assurance mechanisms.

e) Institutional Authority/autonomy

These guidelines do not intend to instruct HEIs to accept credits accumulated elsewhere. The decision to accept or reject credits is an institutional role. However, acceptance or rejection of credits acquired elsewhere should be transparent, and within the context of enhancing and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes. Senate or a responsible organ of the receiving institution should develop internal policies upon which the accept/reject decision shall be based, and as such advise the applicant on the next course of action. A decision to reject or accept credits accumulated or recognition of prior learning should meet the objective for adopting a credit system.

CHAPTER 3

Credit weighting approaches

One of the major purposes of the ESQF is to promote lifelong learning through the articulation of qualification levels as well as a presentation of the required credits to achieve specific level outcomes. The allocation of each level credits on the ESQF is based on the premise that, if a learner successfully achieves the stipulated programme and level outcomes (as per ESQF level descriptors), such a learner will be awarded credits for learning acquired.

ESQF (2020, p.22) defines a credit as a 'currency' providing a measure of learning outcomes achieved in notional hours at a given time. Credits are not based on complexity or volume of materials a student will interact with, but rather, awarded on the basis of achievement (learning outcomes). To-date, most countries in the world, in Europe, Asia, America and Africa, use 1 credit=10 notional hours.

Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to adopt this policy in the design and development of programmes, activities and other forms of instructional materials learners are expected to interact with if they are to attain the required credits to complete a level. HEIs have the leeway to allocate credits ranging from 2-20 per module, but maintain a maximum semester load of 60 credits.

The above is not to suggest that learners must take all the 60 credits. Three issues should provide guidance to the decision related to the number of credits to take:

    i)   Learning outcomes

    ii)   The volume of learning expected

    iii) Actual time (notional) available for study (full time, part-time or virtual). Part-time learners are not expected to carry the same workload in the same study semester as full-time learners, unless special provisions are made to bridge the gap in time.

It should be noted that, if a student is part-time, 60 credits per semester will be an overload.

The adoption of the Credit System is to cater for broad needs of learners entering and completing higher education, as well as to build trust through the adoption of a 'single currency'(credits) to translate the amount of learning attained. Thus, institutions must develop credit architecture/map clearly showing how credits are allocated to each component of learners instruction to achieve the required learning outcomes.

Higher Education Institutions must ensure that;

i) All programme design and development initiatives follow the stipulations as per the ESQF

ii) Credits are allocated on either semester, term or annual basis. For most qualifications/programmes on the ESQF, programmes are assigned 120 credits per year, translating to 60 (120/2) credits per semester or 40 credits per term (120/3). The distribution may vary especially across sub-frames or even within sub-frameworks.

iii) Credits are awarded for successful attainment of learning outcomes. Credits denote a measure of learning that has taken place. Failed modules are not assigned credits. But a score of 90 or 50 (if pass mark) will have the same number of credits, since all denote a pass.

iv) Levels are not intrinsically related to the period of study (refer to ESQF, 2020) and thus, the number of credits allocated do not necessary correspond to the period of study, but the amount of learning that actually took place. It is important to note however, that although independent, the amount of time available for study has a significant bearing on the volume of learning that actually takes place.

v) As prescribed in the ESQF, learning outcomes and level descriptors are related. Learning outcomes are what a learner should achieve if learning takes place, while level descripts are what actually shows that learning took place. The ESQF (2020) defines a learning outcome as a statement on what a learner should understand and can do upon completion of a learning sequence or period of study. Thus, learning outcomes take account of the different types of learning at the same level, including knowledge, and understanding, skills and other forms of competences to be attained. Educators are expected to assign different weights to these components when allocating credits to modules/ programmes.

3.1 The credit hour approach

For the purpose of this policy, a credit hour shall refer to a form of measurement used to determine the number of credits to allocate to a course or module. The decision to allocate credits to a module, other than the consideration of learning outcomes is based on the actual amount of a time a student has in a week, semester, term or year.

The current ESQF articulates the number of credits to be completed if a qualification is to be awarded (see figure 1).
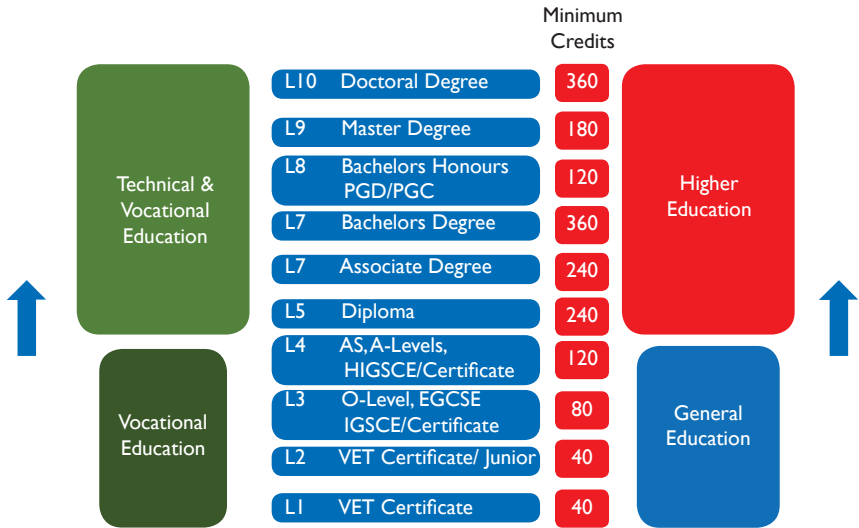
Figure 1: Credit allocation per qualification

Example1 on credit allocation

A student who is available/ready to learn for 8 hours a day, Monday to Friday has 8*5=40 hours of study (ceteris peribus). This considers the maximum amount of time available to study (lectures, practical work, group discussions, and revision).

How many credits can such a student accumulate in a week?

The principle is that 1credit=10 notional hours.

This student(above) will have 40/10=4 credits per week.

In a normal semester of 15 weeks, this student will be able to accumulate 4*15= 60 credits or 120 per year.

Hypothetically, assume that such a student is arbitrarily assigned 7 modules as his/her workload per semester and the time table is drawn to feature all the 7 modules per week.

Thus, 4 credits per week/7 modules=0.57 credits per module. 0.57*10(1 credit =10 notional hours)=approximately 6 hours of lectures and practical work per week, per module. For the 7 modules, 7*6=42 hours.

Question: Is it possible to complete the 7 modules in 15 weeks without an overload?

7*0.57*15=59.85 approx. 60 credits. This assumes that the student has no breaks at all.

- To ensure effective learning, educators may assign 6 modules of 10 credits each per week for 15 weeks

This will translate to 4/6=.67 credits per module per week.

Question: Is it possible to complete the 7 modules in 15 weeks without an overload?

7*0.57*15=59.85 approx. 60 credits. This assumes that the student has no breaks at all.

- To ensure effective learning, educators may assign 6 modules of 10 credits each per week for 15 weeks.

This will translate to 4/6=.67 credits per module per week.

Per semester, .67 credits *15=10 credits*6(modules)=60 credits

Question: How long will it take to attain a qualification that requires a student to accumulate 360 credits? (see ESQF, 2020)

- If a student consistently accumulates 60 credits per semester (with rigorous quality assurance mechanisms in place), it is expected that such a student will complete the programme in:

- 360/60=6 semesters or 3 years.

- For a part-time student who is only able to accumulate half the number of credits a full-time student accumulates per year, the student will complete the programme in 360/30=12 semesters or 6 years.

Note: Institutions must carefully consider the volume of learning to be completed per semester before actual workload is determined.

3.2 The notional study hour approach

Notional time refers to the amount of time it is expected a learner to achieve defined level outcomes in a course of study or at a particular level in the ESQF.

Higher Education Institutions must base teaching activities on learning outcomes. The nature of competences to be achieved by the learner rather than how long it takes the learner to achieve the said competences should be the main point of emphasis. Although related, competences and time are independent of each other.

Notional learning time includes:

- Hours spent in direct learning (time with the instructor or receiving instruction and support)

- Self-directed study(of both standard references or prepared standard reference materials)

- Time spent in undertaking formative and summative assessments

Providers of distance education must ensure that mechanisms are available to track learners' activities. If learning is either asynchronous, synchronous or both, effort should be made to established learning activities and assign time to them. A student who simply opens a web browser does not necessarily demonstrate learning, but what he/she is doing with the materials posted or uploaded online is key.

The ESQF adopted the credit accumulation approach of 1 credit being equal to 10 notional hours. Thus, a student must complete 60*10=600 notional hours or 1200 notional hours per year.

NOTE: The articulation of credits to allocate to a programme are based on the notional hour concept.

What should be considered to ensure learning?

Educators must focus on:

- What and whether learning took place, rather than when learning takes place.

- Teaching time, amount of time spent by the educator to provide instructional materials, including the forms of support required.

- Learning time, which is time spent by the learner decoding instruction or interacting with planned learning materials should be made to take care of the "average learner"

- Eligibility, clearly articulated boundary within which the education system allows learners to complete a programme or part of the programme. A learner should not take longer than the maximum window allowed to complete a programme of study. To achieve prescribed learning outcomes, institutions must first identify the specific activities that learners will do/ interact with and apportion time (%).

Table 1: Hypothetical allocation of notional hours to student activities to a theory module

Activity	Student Hours
Lectures	30(30%)
Seminars/workshops	6(6%)
Practical classes/laboratory	-*
Structured exercises	9(9%)
Set reading etc.	20(20%)
Self-directed study	20(20%)
Assignments – preparation and writing	6(6%)
Examination – revision and attendance	9(9%)
TOTAL	**100**

*Programme developers and Senate/equivalence must develop clear policies on proportions of time to allocate. Effort should be made to ensure uniformity across programmes. Variation in total notional hours will be allowed between practical and theory models. The basic principle is that the allocation of time to activities should be based on their contribution towards the attainment of learning outcomes.
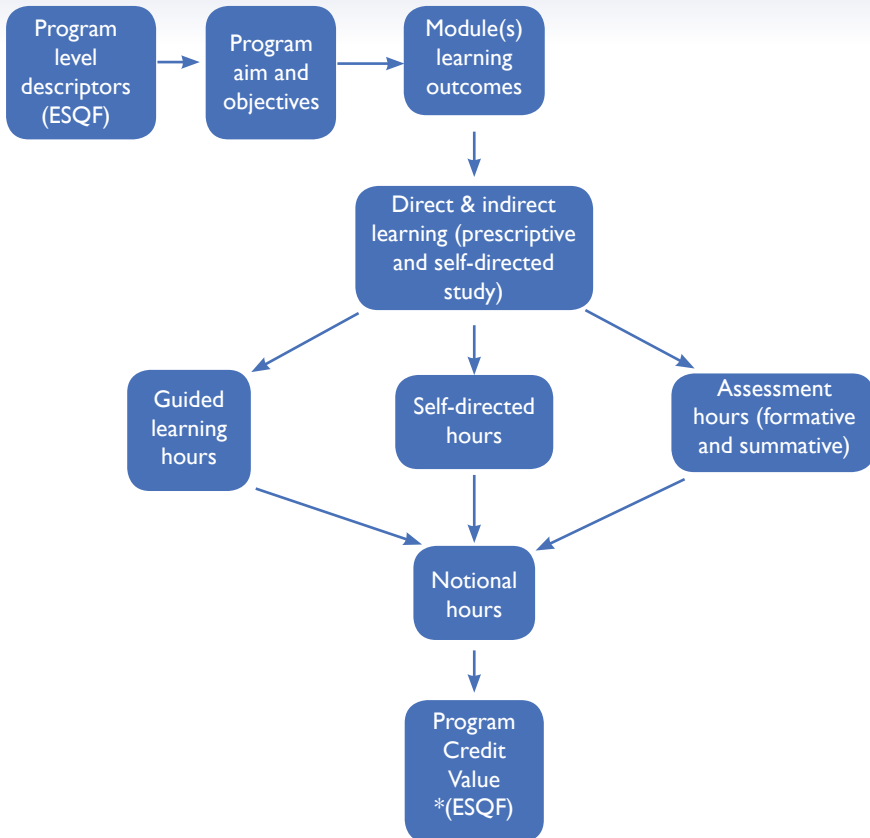
Figure 2: A relational diagram of notional hours and credits

*Credit value represents the quantum of learning. To complete a programme, the ESQF articulates the number of credits (credit value) learners should have accumulated to attain a qualification.

ESQF (2020, p.23) defines credit value as an accepted mechanism that recognizes the quantum of learning for a qualification. From this definition, educators and HEIs must base their decision to transfer learners on credit value, since credit value is the actual medium of exchange to be used when learners transfer their attainment from one qualification to another.

Example on determining credit value

From figure 2, let us assign arbitrary notional hours to the three (3) activities a learner will perform to complete a module. If 30 notional hours are assigned to instructional materials and support, 60 to self-directed study and 10 to assessments, what will be the credit value of these activities? It will be 100/10=10.

Note: Generally, it has been agreed that a ratio of 1:2 is taken when comparing directed instruction and support hours to student hours (self-directed study).

How can credit value derived from notional hours be used to determine the level at which the programme should be pitched?

Institutions could use the table below as a guide.

Table 2: Translating notional hours to credit value

Modules	Contact Hours (CH)	Self-study hours	Assessment hours	Notional learning hours	Credit Value (CV)
1	30	60	10	100	10
2	30	60	10	100	10
3	30	60	10	100	10
4	40	60	Included in contact and self-study	100	10
5	30	60	10	100	10
6	20	70	10	100	10
7	30	70	Included in contact and self-study	100	10
8	30	60	10	100	10
9	40	60	Included in contact and self-study	100	10
10	30	60	10	100	10
11	30	60	10	100	10
12	40	60	Included in contact hours	100	10
Total	**380**	**740**	**80**	**1200**	**120**

With 120 credit value, this qualification falls under ESQF Level 4 (certificate), of both higher education and Vocational/Technical Education.

CHAPTER 4

Translation of study hours into credits

The total count of notional hours must always be computed back into credits to ensure no deviation from the norm.

As a principle, credits and notional hours are related. Their relationship stems from the fact that;

- Learning outcomes rather than available time is the central theme
- Credits are computed on the basis of notional time
- What was learned(competences) rather than when learning took place is the center-piece for analysis
- Evidence of learning as determined by assessments is the main emphasis rather than time spent learning
- Credits provide means for quantifying learning achievable in defined notional hours.

If an institution chooses to use notional hours rather than credits, a defined standard must be used.

Whereas notional hours denote amount of time spent to complete planned learning activities, effort should be made to differentiate notional hours from contact time.

Quality assurance mechanisms at institutional level must be able to track differences, through effectively monitoring student as well as educators' activities.

Higher Education Institutions must;
- Develop and institutionalize a system that provides feedback about the quality of programmes and teaching.
- Establish mechanisms of how feedback from programme and teaching activities are fed into the redesign of programmes.
- Document steps taken to train educators on important aspects of delivery, assessment and feedback.

Quality assurance systems must ensure that contact time is spent in line with notional hours. Otherwise, if not properly monitored, learners may lose time, hence not able to achieve expected learning outcomes. Contact time and notional hours are different, although related. Notional hours are constant, but contact time varies depending on instructional materials or support required.

For example, if learners are expected to spend 2 hours to listen to prescriptive material, but instead spend 1 hour, certainly they will not be able to achieve the required learning outcomes, unless the 1 hour saved during prescriptive instruction is reassigned to another activity to achieve the remaining learning outcome.

CHAPTER 5

Elements to be included in the calculation of credits

For Spady (1994), any outcome based learning system must define the specific outcomes to be achieved rather than a definition that stipulates the number of semesters or time to complete a task. The central focus of an outcome-based education system is that…all activities must be centered around the specific exit outcomes to qualify for a qualification, part or whole (See exist awards as per the ESQF, 2020, p.10).

Educators and programme developers must ensure that in calculating credits, the following aspects are considered:

a) Intended learning outcomes.

This is the purpose of learning, what a learner should achieve or accomplish at the end of a learning activity. This is usually demonstrated, in terms of an acquired competence.

b) Module and level descriptors.

Module outcomes should match the intended competence for the level. A module is a component of instructional material aimed at achieving the defined level outcome(competence).

c) Practical work in laboratories or field should be assigned credits since these form part of learning.

d) Assessments.

The computation and allocation of credits is subjective in some form because to some extent, depends on the educators weighting of activities the learner will perform to achieve a competence.

HEIs Senate/responsible organ and the unit responsible for quality assurance should provide guidance to programme developers and educators when assessing learners. It is important however that, time should be allocated to activities such as; tests, quizzes, term papers, examinations, capstones, or even discussion forums (if to be assessed). The weighting of each activity will be an institutional/educators' responsibility as long as such methods of assessment conform to internal and external quality assurance mechanisms (credible and objective).

Note: A ratio of 1:2 should be maintained. For every 1 hour of contact, learners should be allowed 2 hours of self-study.

CHAPTER 6

Allocation of credits per course/module

The design and implementation of a study programme or instructional material which eventually lead to the award of a qualification should take into account a number of factors;

- Learning outcomes

- Number of credits/notional time required to achieve the specific learning outcomes

- Nature of instructional materials and time required to comprehend such instructional material

- Pedagogy used to deliver instructional material

- Assessment patterns available to evaluate the extent of learning.

These elements are independent, but mutually inclusive(interrelated). The allocation of credits in the design of a programme should take a holistic approach, such that a complete picture of all elements is seen as leading to the attainment of learning.

Educators/Institutions of Higher Learning must ensure that;

- The number of teaching hours available should not be used as the basis for allocating credits to courses. Instead, credits to be allocated should be based on the number of notional hours required to learn, and successfully complete a module.

- A learner-centered approach rather than a teacher-centered approach is supported. Learning outcomes denote what the learner will be able to do at the end of learning. This should be the central theme of any curriculum design activity. The idea of an average learner should not be lost. When designing instructional material, attention should be paid to two issues:

  o   what learners should learn and,
  o   what they will really learn.

The difference between these two is a function of instructional methods as well as the level of comprehension of learning materials. This explains why some learners will score 80% while some 60%, but all acquire the same number of credits.

In the design of, and allocation of credits to courses, emphasis should be made to allocate hours for instruction and hours to student related activities. Thus, for a

10-credit course for example, 3/4 credits should be reversed for instruction and support while 6/7 credits for student time. If modules are developed to supplement teaching and learning, more exercises should be included to enable learners learn at their own pace as well as practice what they learn.

Note: The easiest way to allocate credits to a course is to follow a simple procedure:

- Determine the learning outcomes learners should achieve.

- Estimate on average how long it will take to achieve the learning outcome when learners demonstrate learning or successfully complete a task.

- Once estimates of time (notional) have been determined, this should be computed back to determine the actual credits to allocate per module. The process may require making adjustments to ensure that only key knowledge and skills are built into the learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 7

Horizontal and vertical transfer of credits

7. 1 Horizontal transfer of credits

The purpose of adopting a credit system is to facilitate the mobility of students' credits from one programme or institution to the other. Since credits are a currency which provides a measure of learning outcomes in notional hours at a given time, mechanisms in form of policies should be developed at institutional level to accommodate learners who have successfully accumulated certain credits.

The recognition and transfer of credits from one institution to the other at the same level or programme (within and between) is called, horizontal transfer of credits. On the other hand, transfer of credits denotes the recognition of prior learning represented in form of credits, evidence of which is reflected in form of a letter of recommendation, or academic transcripts.

Horizontal transfer of credits may take two forms:

a) Articulation Agreements between institutions to allow for mobility of credits at the same level (for example from a level 6 at the sending institution to level 6 at the destination institution).

b) Movement of credits within the same institution at the same level (for example, transfer of credits from level 6, Bachelor of Commerce Information Systems Management to level 6, Bachelor of Commerce, Management and Strategy).

Conditions to be met if credits are to be recognized and transferred at the same level:

i. Content of learning materials covered should be at least 75% similar to the destination institution's module.

ii. Learners should apply for transfer of credits at the destination institution and provide all support materials such as module synopsis/content and academic transcript/recommendation from the sending institution.

iii. The receiving institution must provide an elaborate and published criteria for transfer(recognition) of credits

iv. In the event of (a) above, 50% at most of accumulated credits may be transferred as long as condition (i) is met and 100% for (b) as long as module outcomes are similar in outlook as per the destination department's module(s). HEIs are encouraged to develop guidelines to support horizontal transfer of credits.

v.   In the case of credits accumulated on the basis of RPL, HEIs are encouraged to develop guidelines on recognition and transfer of such credits. The applicant requesting for transfer of credits earned on the basis of RPL should provide the necessary support document, and the receiving institution must provide evidence of a clear and elaborate process leading to the decision; to recognize and transfer credits or reject.

vi.   Where possible, institutions should develop agreements based on robust Quality Assurance Mechanisms and transparent exchange of information to facilitate the transfer of credits. In the event that no formal agreements exist, the transfer of credits must be based on established mechanisms within the institution to facilitate progression

7.2 Vertical transfer of credits

Vertical transfer of credits involves the recognition/movement of credits from a lower level on the ESQF to a higher level; for example from level 6 to level 7 within the same qualification on the ESQF.

A number of factors should be considered when making a decision to transfer credits across levels within the ESQF;

- Similarity of content of completed modules at the sending institution with those in the destination programme. 75% similarity should be the acceptable norm.

- The learners' Grade Point Average (GPA). A lower GPA may imply that a learner met just the bare minimum requirements to pass the module. This might however point to some gaps in the competences attained. Thus, credits will not be transferred for a module with a grade point of less than C+

- Notional/credits completed/accumulated at the source in the specific module(s). If for example, a student applies to transfer 10 credits to a module at destination of 15 credits, if learning outcomes are the same, such a module may be transferred. If learning outcomes are somewhat different, a student will lose such credits.

- No credits of an uncredited programme shall be transferred.

- The sending institution must demonstrate the existence of robust quality assurance mechanisms. Documents such as quality audits, programme review, admission policy, examination policy, external examiners report etc., must all be in place and accessible.

- No credits shall be transferred from a lower level of a qualification to a higher level of a different qualification. For example, credits accumulated to complete level 7 qualification are used only for entry purposes to level 8. No exemptions are permitted at this level. Also, no qualification at higher level shall be transferred to a lower level. For example, no credit shall be transferred from a level 9 qualification to complete a level 6 qualifications.

- At most 50% of credits accumulated shall be recognized and transferred provided the above conditions are met.

- No credits shall be transferred if such credits were allocated by the sending institution on the basis of RPL.

- Credits accumulated more than 7 years shall not be transferred.

- For effective implementation of this policy, HEIs must develop internal policies for use at design, implementation of programmes and assessment of learning activities. This policy should guide the design of programmes to articulate the allocation of credits, and the pathways to enable transfer of credits/ progression.

For effective implementation of this policy, HEIs must develop internal policies for use at design, implementation of programs and assessment of learning activities. This policy should guide the design of programs to articulate the allocation of credits, and the pathways to enable transfer of credits/ progression.

CHAPTER 8

Alignment of programmes with ESQF and CAT guidelines

To ensure smooth migration from contact to notional hours, HEIs are required to;

a) Align proposed programme(s) with the ESQF and CAT guidelines for consideration for accreditation.

b) Embark on curriculum review processes of accredited programmes under implementation and align with ESQF and CAT guidelines.

The implementation of the ESQF and CAT guidelines should not cause disruptions to existing learners. The review of programmes and alignment with ESQF and CAT guidelines will be progressive in nature. HEIs are encouraged to develop/align existing quality assurance mechanisms with the stipulation of ESQF and CAT guidelines.

NOTES

NOTES: