

CUSU stance on course criteria and credits for Circle U courses

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Intro

Education is at the centre of Circle U and one of the most integral elements of the alliance. As such it is of the greatest importance that the education is of the highest standard and therefore that the courses offered by the alliance follow the following criteria and properly award credits. CUSU considers this to be one of the most important aspects of the alliance to have in order.

General criteria

English should be the main language of the catalogue courses: While it seems obvious to have courses in English to minimise language barriers, there are many more specific aspects that are easily overlooked. These include but are not limited to the following points:

- **Teaching has to be offered in english:** Professors offering courses intended to be part of mobility programmes has to be able to conduct the teaching in english with sufficient proficiency to be understood
- **Material has to have English versions:** The teaching is not limited to the classroom, but also the preparation, handins, and work related to it. As such it is important that material is provided in english. This might not only be texts, but also tools and problems involved.
- **Examination has to be offered to conduct in english:** In the case that the education involves a grading and examination is it important that this is conducted in a way that is fair and as such is offered in English such that language barriers does not affect the outcome of the examination

Information has to be readily available: Internationalisation is a big and important decision for students to make and takes a lot of effort. As such it is important that students are well informed about the courses, both before, throughout and after about the subjects, expectations and credits. There should be english description of all available courses online accessible by students, both for them to make an educated and proper choice and also to make sure that the courses are kept to a proper standard

Inclusivity policy :It is unfortunately not uncommon that students have an unpleasant experience abroad, surprised that the teaching isn't in the language they expected to be as mentioned in the brochure/catalogue, also that they have difficulty making day to day activities (application, registration). Therefore it is important that the host university provides

an inclusive environment for international students and properly accommodates students with special needs. Semester abroad

Course criteria

Course prerequisites: It is quite common that some courses expect and demand that you have completed a previous course given the accumulative element of education. This however can in certain conditions lead to the unfortunate situation where exchange is troublesome if not downright impossible if the home university has very strict requirements with very specific courses. As such is it important that universities across the alliance recognise courses from each other and look into dispensation from these strict rules. As such should course descriptions be detailed and well defined especially regarding the pre-requisites and the skills being required.

Skill evaluation: Students, both home and abroad have an intention to learn and develop the skills of their subject. It is however possible that issues arise which might lead to them missing a few days of teaching here and there. With education at the centre of the alliance is it important that examination is purely based on competence. CUSU considers that mandatory attendance should not affect exams as long as the course doesn't have a practical component (eg. lab etc).

Exam criteria

Standardised exam information:

Circle U should have standardised agreements regarding information about exams, given the sometimes unexpected expectations during exams, such as requiring handwritten exams. Circle U should work towards having exam requirements that are upfront and accessible to students across all our universities.

Exam quality:

Circle U should strive for a high quality of exams and should agree to look into how exams are conducted across the alliance and improve upon the methods used. This should be with the intention of developing the most fair and accurate methods of determining the competence of the students

Special Educational Assistance:

All universities members of the alliance should provide a special onboarding and assistance process for international students with special needs. Since they're not always familiar with the university and the country's culture in that matter, special attention should be provided for them to have the best experience and prohibit any discrimination.

Credits

Grade impact on average:

Courses without grading, but only “passed/not passed” should not have any negative impact on the students grading average. E.g. it can’t be turned into a “C”, but should instead just be counted as “Passed” on the student’s diploma. This is to avoid a possible negative impact on a student’s ability to achieve an honour scholarship and PhD. Students should not be punished for participating in Circle U activities.

Short term mobility

Criteria

Practical:

Due to the short term nature of the concept, it is important that the universities are prepared to minimise the practical issues that might arise given the students don't have time to identify, solve or get used to issues that are inherent to the host country.

Housing: Finding temporary housing can be quite difficult. Especially if it is only for a month or shorter. As such the university hosting should have a clear and transparent plan for housing for the students, that is both practical and affordable.

Value:

Short term mobility has to add some sort of value to the student based on the mobility. It is important that physical mobility is thought well into each instance and used to the greatest effect possible.

Credits

Certificate: regardless of whether or not the short term mobility yields ECTS is it important that a certificate of completion is issued for the student has acquired the skills and competence offered. These should be recognised by all universities in the alliance

In the case a course provides proficiency with a practical application, should it be attempted to structure such that it can grant an official international certificate of that particular skill. An example would be a certificate of being able to handle certain lab equipment. Circle U should look into using certificates as dispensation for not having certain course requirements.

ECTS:

ECTS should be granted if the course can be accredited. In case ECTS can be granted, students should have the option to opt out of receiving the ECTS since they can lead to huge administrative issues regarding the structure of the studies.

To avoid missing an odd number of ECTS-points when doing an exchange, the amount of ECTS-points for courses should be standardised. If this is not possible, the student should be able to convert the official hour amount of the course into ECTS-points at their home

university. Preferably a conversion table should be made, so it is clear how many ECTS-points each course provides at a given university.

Online mobility

Criteria

Clear information:

Information about the course should be clear, including course criteria and requirements needed to pass the class

Consider multiple forms

Time zones should be taken into consideration and the courses should therefore not be put too late or early in the day

Course completion:

Attendance should not be the only way a course can determine whether you should get the certificate. Projects and handins should be considered a viable way of doing this

Group work:

Group Work and handins should be taken into consideration while designing courses, both for didactic reasons, but also to increase internationalisation.

Use online platforms to involve guest speakers:

CUSU thinks that it is important that we use the benefits of the online platforms and encourage professors to invite experts across the world as guest speakers.

Privacy:

Privacy is an important right and we believe that having your camera on should be voluntary. It is also important to note that not all students have the required internet/hardware to have cameras on.

Responsibility for quality

The responsibility of the quality lies by the home university and should obey minimum standards set by Circle U.

Responsibility for material and accessibility

It is the responsibility of the home university to make sure that all students have access to necessary material. The university is also responsible for the accessibility to students with special needs.

Circle U should make rules and standards regarding to accessibility and look into resources that could be required by the universities to use

Credits

ECTS:

ECTS for online courses are a complicated matter legally. Ideally we should be able to dispense ECTS at will but that is unfortunately not the case. Courses of a sufficiently large size should yield ECTS according to the expected time investment. Courses not yielding ECTS should have their expected time investment to a level that is reasonable for the situation and keep in mind that students don't receive ECTS

Certificate:

Should award a certificate and maybe ECTS, but that has a lot of complications.

As of now we consider that the courses should only award certificates until a solution for ECTS has been found. The duration and intensity of the courses should be kept in mind if there are no ECTS.

Certificates might be used for getting courses you might otherwise not meet the requirements for.