

General principles regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures

1. Introduction

In Europe, learning outcomes are defined as statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning¹.

The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) has commenced its work on learning outcomes in 2006. The members of ECA now agree that learning outcomes can be taken into account during any assessment procedure in higher education and that this enhances the student-centred approach. They agree that taking into account learning outcomes in accreditation procedures contributes to the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions.

In order to increase mutual trust and transparency, the members of ECA concur that accreditation procedures should take into account the following principles.

2. Principles regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures

Principle 1: Accreditation organisations should take into account learning outcomes in their assessments, thus enhancing Mutual Recognition of accreditation decisions.

Principle 2: Accreditation organisations should assess whether the learning outcomes are in line with the National Qualifications Framework and/or the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

Principle 3: Learning outcomes are a shared concern of stakeholders and thus accreditation organisations should assess whether the higher education institutions consider stakeholders opinion when designing or revising programmes and learning outcomes.

Principle 4: Accreditation organisations should assess whether learning outcomes and their assessment by higher education institutions are understandable and public.

Principle 5: Accreditation organisations should assess whether curriculum design and content enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and whether higher education institutions apply proper procedures to assess it.

Principle 6: In the case of programme accreditation, accreditation organisations should make explicit reference to the programmes learning outcomes in their reports.

Principle 7: In the case of institutional accreditation, accreditation organisations should evaluate the institution's provisions regarding the implementation and assessment of learning outcomes.

¹ A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, Bologna Working Group on Qualifications, p 29.
For the purpose of this document *Period of learning* refers to *programme* (Bachelor, Master, PhD)