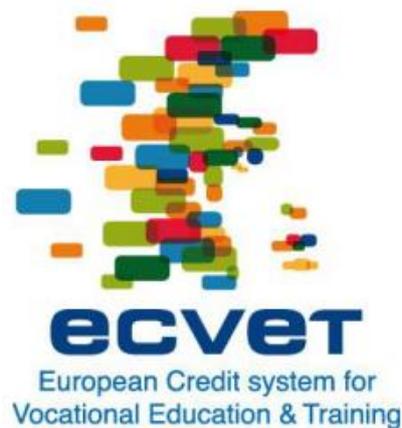


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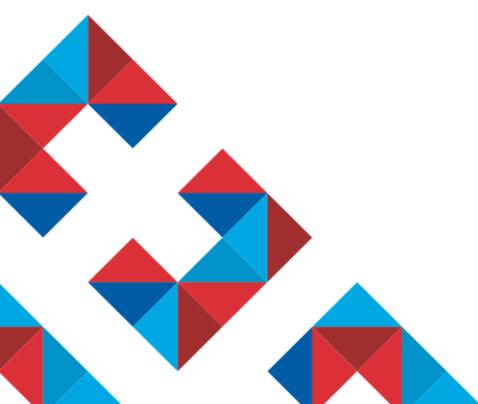
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UK ACROSS EUROPE



# ECVET Explained:

Guidance for awarding organisations and their recognised centres

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Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.  
The Erasmus+ UK National Agency is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.

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## 1. What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide is aimed at awarding organisations (AOs) and their recognised centres to support the accreditation of learning gained as part of study or work experience in the European Union (EU). AOs are most likely to encounter ECVET as part of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 projects (which focus on mobility - find out more on [www.erasmusplus.org.uk](http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk)).

This guide augments the guidance 'Getting the credit your learners deserve' primarily aimed at colleges and training providers, by looking at the processes that allow for the successful assessment, verification and certification of the learning outcomes achieved as part of a study visit or work placement abroad.

### What is ECVET?

- ECVET stands for "The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training". It is a major European initiative for international mobility and mutual understanding of programmes and qualifications, which has been progressively rolled out from 2011 onwards.
- ECVET is a means of recognising learning in one country so that it counts towards a qualification in another.
- It provides a set of principles that can be applied flexibly in different countries and in different educational contexts.

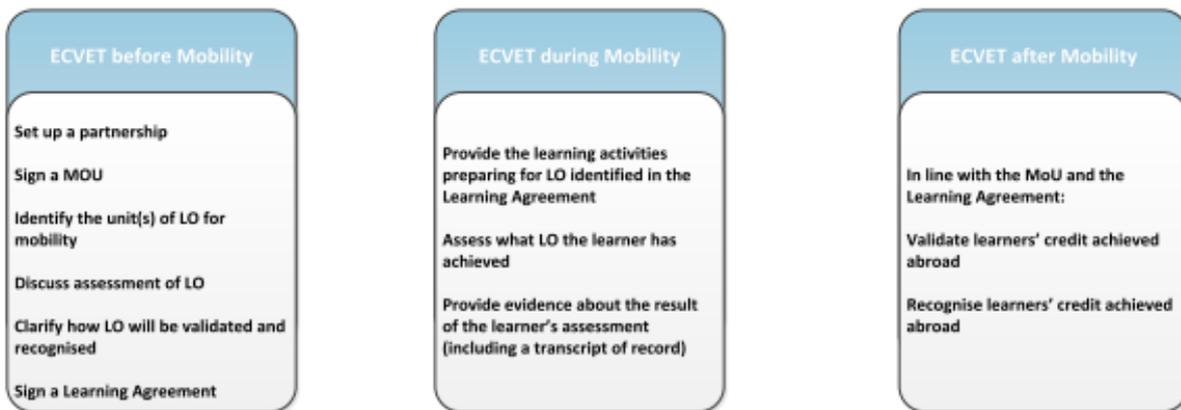
These principles act as a common language through which vocational education and training providers can better understand provision in other EU countries for the benefit of their learners.

The European Union embraces 28 states and 400 million people. Each state has its own national education system. ECVET is one of the initiatives to improve and facilitate mutual recognition of skills for the labour market.

The earliest examples of educational mobility supported by the EU were at HE level, and for periods of at least a term. ECVET attempts to extend the recognition of educational mobility in Vocational Education and Training (VET) to shorter periods, and to a much wider variety of learning experiences, including work exchanges as well as exchanges between learning providers.

## 2. ECVET processes and terminology explained

A college or training provider in the UK (the home institution) arranges a study visit or work placement (a mobility) with a similar organisation in the EU (the host institution). These are known as the competent institutions.



*(Taken from 'ECVET for Geographical Mobility')*

The competent institutions agree what learning will take place (the learning outcomes), so that it supports the requirements of the learner's programme or qualification in the UK. If there is a sufficient match between the learning that will take place abroad and LOs from one or more of the units of the qualification that is being taken in the UK, it may be possible for the learning to be assessed and the evidence produced abroad, subjected to the normal quality assurance processes for internal and external verification (validation is the term used in ECVET) processes so that it counts towards the award of a unit or a qualification.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is signed between host and home institutions and includes information about the learning outcomes and assessment arrangements. A Learning Agreement is signed by the home and host institutions and the learner. This confirms the exact arrangements that are in place for the learner, including the learner's progress so far.

In many cases an assessor from the UK will accompany learners and undertake assessment in the same way that they would do in the UK. In some cases evidence will be collected via an e-portfolio and assessed once the learner returns home. Assessment on paper or ICT, i.e. more conventional cognitive tests, can of course be undertaken in the same way as at home. When partnerships between the home and the host institution become secure, it may be possible for the host organisation to assess, providing appropriate safeguards are in place.

AOs need to take account of specific assessment requirements when specifying the required assessment strategy. However, it is ultimately the AO who determines the assessment strategy and the specific requirements for assessors and the context within which the assessment takes place.

### 3. Case Studies

A useful set of case studies have been published as part of the UK ECVET Experts work which illustrate the use of the ECVET principles in transnational mobility. These case studies can be accessed from the Erasmus+ UK National Agency [website](#).

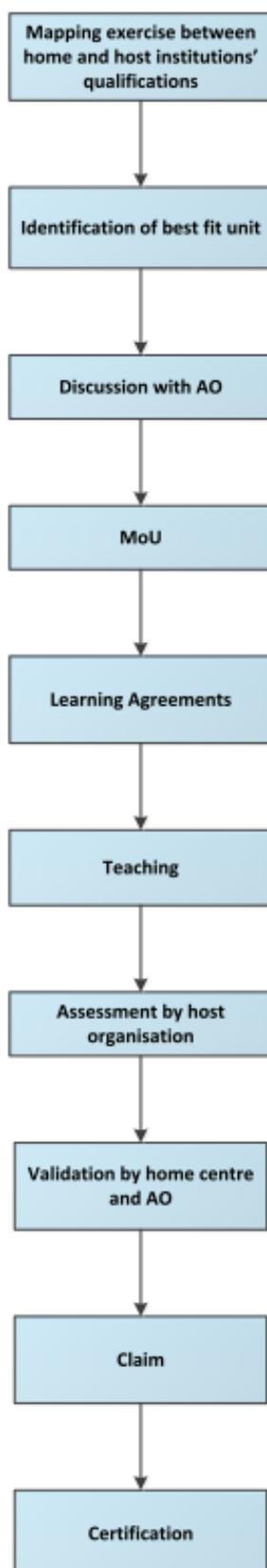
Three have been reproduced here as examples and are included in Annex 1.

## 4. Key requirements for Awarding Organisations supporting ECVET

Centres that wish to assess achievement gained abroad so that it can count as evidence towards a qualification in the UK will need approval from their awarding organisation as part of the planning they undertake before signing the MoU. The AO is responsible and accountable to the regulators for ensuring the validity and reliability of the assessment and any related awards it makes. It must make its own judgements on the levels of risk and controls. Where there is any tension between the security of an award and supporting mobility study, an AO must prioritise the security of the award.

AOs remain accountable for the awards they make even where learning takes place, and evidence is generated, overseas. AOs will need to assure themselves that they are in a position to make an award in line with the relevant regulatory requirements which apply to them.

Essential steps to successful qualification or unit award for mobility periods:



The validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad that do not count towards a learner's home qualification.

ECVET principles can also be used for mobility periods where the learning outcomes achieved do not count towards the qualification which the learner is undertaking at home. For example ECVET principles can be used to:

- improve the validation and recognition of both key competences (such as foreign language skills) as well as more technical skills and competences; and enrich the learner's learning pathway by acquiring abroad the knowledge, skills and competences which they would not have had the possibility to achieve in their home institution (for example, because of differences in technologies used or because of the variety of products);
- help VET providers to respond to certain labour market needs by sending learners abroad for units they cannot deliver themselves (for example, because of the investment necessary to purchase the technology). For the same reasons, VET providers may be able to attract new learners from abroad.

For these situations learning outcomes for the mobility period are negotiated and agreed (between the home and the host institution and the learner) to create 'mobility units' (or customised units) which can be recognised and recorded on the learner's transcript or recognised as additional credit (on top of the qualification being undertaken by the learner).

Many AOs already offer a service to accredit customised learning. Most do this by developing units of assessment for learning programmes. These units should be designed with learning outcomes, assessment criteria, a level and a credit value. In Wales, the Quality Assured Lifelong Learning Pillar (QALL) of the CQFW provides a formal process for doing this, which is quality-assured by the Welsh Government. In Scotland, colleges and some other organisations are approved Credit Rating Bodies that are able to develop customised programmes for inclusion in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

In England customised programmes are covered by the general provisions that regulate AOs and qualifications through the Qualifications and Credit Framework. These regulations are set by Ofqual. To be accredited on the QCF, qualifications will have employer (or other user) support.

In Northern Ireland, Ofqual regulates vocational qualifications only; the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment regulates all other qualifications.

## 5. Frequently Asked Questions

What are the advantages to an educational institution of incorporating ECVET principles into a student mobility programme?

Being clear about Learning Outcomes will help focus the learning programme and make it clear to participants what they will get out of the mobility. It will help ensure that the level and complexity of the programme matches the needs of those who are involved. If you are also able to provide learning that the AO is confident leads to the award of credit, it will provide an externally quality assured outcome. Learners may be able to use their credit to contribute to a qualification at a later stage.

How will the AO recover additional costs?

It is legitimate for the AO to make a charge in the same way that there is a charge for a qualification. AOs are advised to establish a clear policy on this matter, and to inform their centres of their procedures and charges.

Does the AO have to be involved or can an institution organise an ECVET relationship in collaboration with an overseas partner?

It may be that what the student hopes to learn abroad does not cover any elements of the learning outcomes of the qualification being studied at home. In that case the AO need not be informed. If the home institution wishes credit to be awarded by a UK-based AO towards a qualification regulated here, then it will need to inform the AO well before the students depart.

How can I be sure that a partnership is working effectively?

It may be sensible to encourage the home institution to test, on the return to the UK of the first few learners, the skills already assessed abroad, enabling both partners to ascertain the comparability of their assessment standards and methods. With subsequent tranches of learners the institution, and the AO, can reduce duplication of assessment effort as this will suppress some of ECVET's advantages.

How can an AO best understand an individual exchange partnership?

A successful MoU is central to an effective ECVET relationship, because it defines (among other things) the Learning Outcomes that will be assessed, how this will be done, and how these fulfil the unit(s) requirements of the qualification which is being studied in the UK.

What are ECVET points?

You may see reference to ECVET points. UK institutions don't need to worry about ECVET points – we have qualifications and units with clearly defined levels and volume. ECVET points are used by

those countries that do not have established credit and qualifications systems and are developing these using ECVET principles.

Further information on ECVET is available at: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/networks-and-initiatives>.

## Glossary

### Credit

The use of credit in ECVET means evidence that learning achieved abroad can be recognised towards the award of a qualification or unit(s). It is not the same as the definition of credit used in the qualification frameworks of the UK.

### Host Institution

The company or college receiving the mobile learner.

### Home Institution

The company or college in the learner's home country which usually employs or educates him or her.

### Learning Agreement

An agreement signed between each learner, the home and host institution.

### Learning Outcomes

The skills, knowledge or understanding which a learner is intended to master as a result of studying for a unit or qualification.

### MoU

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Host Institution and the Home Institution provides a framework for both institutions to agree procedures for learning outcomes, assessment, quality assurance, validation and recognition.

## Annex 1

### Case Study A: South Nottingham College (Now part of Central Nottingham College) and Tenerife Job Training

This project involved a group of level 2 and 3 BTEC National Diploma/Certificate in Travel and Tourism learners, and hair and beauty learners to undertake a placement in Tenerife of nine weeks duration. The first week comprised language training and the remaining eight weeks were spent in local 4/5\* hotels receiving on-the-job training from professionals operating in the field. It was discussed with Pearson before the event and the broad principles agreed with them.

A 'Professional Skills Assessment' tool was used by the accompanying South Nottingham college staff, Tenerife Job Training and the individual participants to carry out assessments of their learning progress before, during and on completion of the placement in order to measure skills progress achieved during the placement.

This shows elements of implementation of ECVET principles in that learners were able to have their learning outcomes measured and assessed by the host partner as well as by the college (the home institution) and individual participants.

### Case Study B: Cumbernauld College (Now part of New College Lanarkshire) and France, Italy and Spain

Cumbernauld College has been involved with mobility programmes for some time. However, with the ECVET principles, consideration has been given as to how to get the most out of each learning experience for the learner during a Leonardo project, whilst at the same time generating sufficient robust evidence to satisfy the awarding organisation (in their case mostly SQA). The Promotion of Education through Rugby for Youth (POETRY) project was awarded Leonardo Mobility funding in 2011. The project sends young people, aged 15 – 19, on two week placements to France, Italy or Spain to develop their knowledge and skills, vocational and soft skills, and enhance their employment prospects. Participants are actively involved in Initial Vocational Training awards before, during and after the trip. Upon successful completion, participants are awarded the SQA Intermediate 1 or 2 (SCQF level 4 or 5) Award in Skills for Work – Sport and Recreation and/ or a Scottish Rugby Union coaching certification. The College has confirmed the evidence gathering and quality assurance process with SQA.

More recently however, the College has also sought to develop new generic mobility units from scratch, based on learning outcomes. These units have then been agreed with European partners and will be utilised by all of those involved in the project. As Cumbernauld College is recognised as a Credit Rating Body by the SCQF Partnership it has been able apply a credit rating to this award, enabling it to be placed within the SCQF database using their own quality processes.

## Case Study C: GO Wales ETARC and Bordeaux, France

In this mobility placement a Welsh University learner of French, planning to study at the Sorbonne (host institution) for her third year exchange, enrolled through GO Wales ETARC (the Intermediary institution) in a work placement with CROUS de Bordeaux-Aquitaine (the host institution). The host and home institution, along with the learner identified three learning outcomes, which were aligned with a City and Guilds Professional Development Award and with the European framework for language comprehension. These were:

- To improve in the French language from B1 to B2
- To gain a comprehension of professional culture in France.
- To render more adaptability for future career challenges.

In this case, the host institution (a company), assessed the learner by observing her work and setting her more demanding tasks as her skills and confidence grew. The qualification was coterminous with the placement.

The learner found the placement very positive and achieved her learning outcomes. She gained valuable international work experience and also had a taste of what a future career in administration would be like. She saw this placement as greatly improving her fluency in French, along with her “determination to succeed”. On reflection, she took the view that the learning outcomes selected were not optimal, since she found it hard to analyse specific progress made over the week using the weekly logs. Upon reflection, she felt that learning outcomes should have been selected that could be measured more easily on a week to week basis.