

Recognising Learning Outcomes

Riga, December 2004

Norman Sharp
Head of Scottish Office
Quality Assurance Agency



Outline of presentation

- What are learning outcomes?
- What is the state of development across the Bologna countries?
- What difference will the adoption of learning outcomes make to the Bologna process?



What are learning outcomes?

- ‘Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.’ (2004 ECTS Users’ Guide.)
- Learning outcomes are: Transparent, communicable and assessable.
- Learning outcomes represent a shift from teacher to learner centred; from inputs to outputs



Development across the Bologna countries

- Stephen Adams reports tentatively a positive Europe-wide movement toward the adoption of learning outcomes.
- However, he also reports a lack of a strategic thrust which ‘presents a significant challenge to the Bologna process and even calls into doubt the full realisation of the European Higher Education Area by 2010.’ (p3)



Why are learning outcomes important for Bologna?

- The failure of input measures;
- Quality assurance;
- Information for students, employers, universities, and professional bodies;
- Mobility – credit, students and graduates;
- Pedagogical development- learning and assessment



continued

- Support the recognition of learning from a wide variety of sources – VET, WBL, RPL etc
- Support for lifelong learners



Some closing thoughts

- Without learning outcomes, the Bologna process will have more limited success;
- Without learning outcomes, credit frameworks will be largely inoperable;
- Without learning outcomes, some students will remain marginalised
- We need to build on a good start: there are no quick fixes.

