

Guidance documents to those producing diploma supplements

III GLOSSARY:

Definitions and usage of terms vary from country to country. To reduce the possibility of misunderstanding this glossary aims to cover all the main terms used in the papers associated with the Diploma Supplement initiative. It is partly based and fully consistent with the definition used in the 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region..

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION refers to the recognition of courses, qualifications or diplomas from one (domestic or foreign) higher education institution by another. Usually this is sought as a basis for access to further new study at the second institution (cumulative recognition) or, as recognition allowing some sort of exemption from having to re-study elements of a programme (recognition with advanced standing). A further type of academic recognition is recognition of studies taken elsewhere in another institution that replace a comparable period of study at the home institution. This (recognition by substitution) operates under the European Credit Transfer System ((ECTS) mobility scheme (see ECTS).

ACCESS (to higher education) refers to the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education. Access is distinct from admission, which concerns the individuals' actual participation in the higher education programme concerned.

ACCREDITATION is the process by which one higher education institution gains authority to award, and/or gains recognition of, its qualifications from another senior competent authority. This might be the State, a government agency or, another domestic or foreign higher education institution (see FRANCHISE). The term has its origins in the American system and is used in some European countries in the same way as 'recognition'.

ADMISSION the act of, or system for, allowing qualified applicants to pursue studies in higher education at a given institution and/or a given programme.

ASSESSMENT i) (of institutions or programmes) the process for establishing the educational quality of a higher education institution or programme; ii) (of individual qualifications) the written appraisal or evaluation of an individual's foreign qualifications by a competent authority; iii) (of individual students) the actual testing of a student's ability and skills within a programme (e.g. by examination).

AWARD this is used synonymously with qualification.

COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITY a body officially charged with making binding decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

COURSE a part of a programme of studies that is normally self-contained and assessed separately. Complete study programmes are normally composed of several courses.

CREDENTIAL a term sometimes used to refer to a qualification (see QUALIFICATION).

CREDENTIAL EVALUATOR the individual who makes a judgement on the recognition of foreign qualifications (see COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITY).

CREDIT the 'currency' providing a measure of learning outcomes achieved in a notional time at a given level. Usually associated with credit-based modular courses (see ECTS).

DE FACTO RECOGNITION refers to situations of unregulated professional recognition, such as where no national legal authorisation to practice a particular profession exists or is required. This is the most problematic area of professional recognition (see PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION and RECOGNITION).

DE JURE RECOGNITION refers to the recognition of the right to work in a specific (European Union or European Economic Area) country in a legally regulated profession (e.g. medical doctor). These situations are subject to various European Union Directives whereby if a citizen is a fully qualified professional in one Member State, he or she has a right to be recognised as a professional in another Member State, including the right to use the relevant professional title (see REGULATED PROFESSION, PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION and RECOGNITION).

DIPLOMA here refers to any qualification/credential. There is a possibility of confusion here. In some educational systems the term refers to a specific category or type of qualification. It is not being used in this restricted sense here.

ECTS the European Credit Transfer System (developed by the European Commission). This is a system based on ECTS credits (workload), designed to facilitate mobility, credit transfer and the international recognition of periods of study completed abroad (see ACADEMIC RECOGNITION).

ENIC European (Council of Europe/UNESCO) National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility.

FRANCHISE the situation where an institution agrees to authorise another institution (nationally or internationally) to deliver an approved programme whilst normally retaining overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. However, significant variations in franchise relationships exist.

FIELD OF STUDY the main disciplines or subject areas of a qualification.

HIGHER EDUCATION all types of courses of study, or sets of courses (programmes), training, or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to its higher education system. Higher education builds on the level of competence, knowledge and skills generally acquired through secondary education (see HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION and PROGRAMME OF STUDY). Higher education normally comes after secondary education in time and is normally offered

through higher education programmes at higher education institutions. However, it should be noted that higher education institutions may give courses of study that are not higher education level. Conversely, institutions which are not considered as belonging to the higher education system may offer some higher education programmes. The exact definition of higher education and higher education institutions vary from country to country. For example, in some countries, nursing is considered to be a field of higher education, whereas in other countries, nursing is considered to be part of post-secondary education without being higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION an establishment providing higher education and recognised by the competent authorities as belonging to its system of higher education (see **HIGHER EDUCATION** and **PROGRAMME OF STUDY**).

LEARNING OUTCOMES the specific intellectual and practical skills gained and tested by the successful completion of a unit, course or whole programme of study.

LEVEL the place of a qualification in the higher education system. Normally, a national hierarchy of qualifications exists. The number of levels of higher education qualifications vary between countries and/or kinds of higher education (see **LEVEL INDICATORS**).

LEVEL INDICATORS these can range from any general information on the role of the qualification to highly detailed specific statements about the nature, skills and competencies associated with the successful completion of parts or all of a qualification (see **LEVEL**).

LISBON CONVENTION refers to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region adopted in Lisbon April 1997.

MODULE a separate and coherent block of learning. Part of a modular programme of studies where the curriculum is divided into a range of similar sized segments.

NARIC National Academic Recognition Information Centre (European Union and European Economic Area). Some NARICs also have responsibilities for professional recognition.

PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION refers to the right to practise and the professional status accorded to a holder of a qualification. In the European Union recognition for professional purposes is defined as the legal act by which a competent authority in a host Member State recognises that the qualifications obtained by an applicant in another Member State are suitable for the pursuit on its territory of a professional activity whose practice is legally regulated (see **REGULATED PROFESSION**, **DE JURE RECOGNITION**, **DE FACTO RECOGNITION** and **RECOGNITION**).

PROGRAMME OF STUDY a set of courses, the various components of which complement and build on each other in order to provide the student with a higher education qualification (see **HIGHER EDUCATION**, **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** and

COURSE). “Programme” also denotes the academic fields of study and requirements that collectively define the qualification (see FIELD OF STUDY).

QUALIFICATION i) higher education qualification: any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme; ii) qualification giving access to higher education: any diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of an education programme and giving the holder of the qualification the right to be considered for admission to higher education (see HIGHER EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION and PROGRAMME OF STUDY). Also termed as any higher education award given for the successful completion of a programme of learning; a generic term that refers to the wide variety of higher education qualifications at different levels and across different countries.

QUALITY ASSURANCE refers to the internal and external processes by which the quality of academic provision is maintained.

RECOGNITION a formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities. An assessment of individual qualifications. Such assessment may be any kind of statement on the value of (in this case) a foreign qualification. Recognition refers to a formal statement by a competent recognition authority acknowledging the value of the qualification in question and indicating the consequences of this recognition for the holder of the qualification. For example a qualification may be recognised for the purposes of further study at a given level (academic recognition), or for the use of a title, or for the exercise of employment purposes (professional recognition) (see COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITY, QUALIFICATION, ACADEMIC RECOGNITION and PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION). Recognition can also refer to the accreditation of a higher education institution by another authority (see ACCREDITATION).

REGULATED PROFESSION refers to professions in the European Union and European Economic Area whose practice is regulated in some way by law or administrative rules (see DE JURE RECOGNITION).

TRANSCRIPT an official record or breakdown of a student's progress and achievements. Many credit-based education systems employ detailed transcripts that show the credits and grades for units undertaken (e.g. ECTS Transcript of Records).

VALIDATION the process by which a recognised awarding institution judges that a programme of study leading to a qualification is of appropriate quality and standard. This can be a programme of its own or that of a subordinate institution (see FRANCHISE).