

**PROBLEM OF REALISTIC ESTIMATION AND ECTS AWARD FOR ART SUBJECTS IN THE CURRICULUM OF STUDY PROGRAMS IN THE FIELD OF PERFORMING ARTS**

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**Abstract:** Bologna reform of higher education in Serbia encompasses, among other things, introduction of ECT system which would enable comparison of different syllabi in European universities and students' mobility. Introduction of ECT was preceded by evaluation of the curriculum of study programs and estimation of realistic time necessary for mastering the subject matter which encompasses sum of contact hours spent with lecturer and student's independent work. Previously calculated ECTS for art study subjects in the field of performing arts at the Faculty of Arts in Pristina in 2011, after analysis of questionnaires and data on study success, indicated that it was necessary to align ECTS with subject contents in a more realistic way. ECTS values of art studies in the field of performing arts during 2015 were increased. Are the recently introduced values in accordance with traditional performing school advice, which treat performer's several hours work in preparation of repertoire as necessary?

**Keywords:** ECTS, study program, Performing arts, Bologna declaration

**INTRODUCTION**

*European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*, abbreviation of which is ECTS, being one of the aims of the Bologna declaration<sup>139</sup> presents a numerical system of qualitative assessment of students' work put into acquiring the knowledge, abilities and skills anticipated by the study program of study, that is particular subjects within the curriculum. The system presents one of the composing elements in developing the largest students' exchange, thus enabling comparison of different syllabi at the universities and higher educational institutions in Europe and diploma recognition, in particular.

ECTS presents a numerical system that measures anticipated time necessary for achieving defined learning outcomes, that is the workload, learning outcomes and working hours. The system is implemented in order to provide mobility of the students, and also to increase an overall efficiency of studying.

The use of ECTS began in 1989 and is adopted in the majority of European laws on higher education. This system also ensures recognition of study period abroad thus increasing quality and mobility possibilities for students across Europe. It is based on the principle of estimation of the workload of a course during one academic year lasting 1500–1800 hours per year i.e. 60 ECTS, which means that 1 ECTS is equivalent to 25–30 working hours. ECTS credits show quality of work each subject/course requires in regard to the overall quality of work needed for a full year of work requirements and are awarded after successful fulfillment of obligations anticipated by the subject as a confirmation of the student's fulfillment of defined learning outcomes<sup>140</sup> presenting also quantitative value of learning outcomes, that is, competence gained by the student after successful mastering of a course i.e. subject.

ECTS award to courses that is subjects within a study program presents a very complex and delicate task.

**APPLICATION OF UNIQUE METHODOLOGY AND ECTS AWARD**

Coordination and evaluation of the workload expressed in ECTS in study programs in the Performing Arts field, at the Faculty of Pristina – Kosovska Mitrovica, began with an overall and a detailed curriculum evaluation in 2009.<sup>141</sup>

The team responsible for evaluation of study programs was first faced with a problem of adapting study programs to the standards for accreditation of study programs of the first and second degree of education. Obligation of at least 20 hours of active teaching a week per each year of study required design of new subjects, as the then existing curriculum that was used at the Faculty mainly consisted of the subjects in

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<sup>139</sup>Болоњска декларација [Bologna declaration]

[http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/BOLOGNA\\_DECLARATION.pdf](http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.pdf)

<sup>140</sup>Влада Републике Србије, Закон високог образовања [Government of the Republic of Serbia, Law on Higher education], Службени гласник Републике Србије, 88/2017

<http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/zakoni/2017/2477-17%20lat.pdf>

<sup>141</sup>Стандарди за акредитацију студијских програма првог и другог нивоа образовања [Standards for the preparation of documents for accreditation of study programmes of the first and second level of higher education] <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Standardi-i-dopuna-standard-a-za-akreditaciju-studijskih-programa-I-i-II-nivoa.pdf>

the area of Performing arts, which is justified by the fact that the area from the performing arts requires a great number of hours of individual work and previous preparation of subject content. Successful realization of a lesson with a teacher as well as successful realization of subject contents and achieving a high level of performance in public as well as in the exam itself, depends, first of all, on a previous continuous and constant preparation of the student himself.

Apart from compulsory amount of hours, first adopted standards for accreditation of study programs in the field of art, anticipated three groups of subjects of art studies of the first degree: artistic (50–60%), theoretic-artistic (30–40%) and social-humanistic (10%) group 4 standards for accreditation.

Competencies of graduated students – general and subject-specific were defined first. In accordance with outcomes, new subjects and their contents were conceptualized, a number of contact hours which are specified to be realized during lectures and practice are being defined. By a unique methodology of realistic estimation of time necessary for mastering the subject content, each course, that is, subject was awarded ECTS values, accordingly.

After the curriculum design, the team considered fulfillment of the standards for accreditation of study programs of first degree for the field of Art and found out that the suggested study program does not meet percentage classification in regard to the three groups. The artistic group (in which the subjects in the area of Performing arts are the basic ones), in regard to the realistic estimation of time for independent work for mastering the subject content (in the case of the performing arts subjects, in particular, as they encompass interpretation of traditionally conceptualized contents for examining students' knowledge) and awarded ECTS credit points, was almost 90%. After a number of debates and discussions of teachers responsible for the future realization of contents, the study program was, however, adapted to the standards and was adopted by the Faculty of Arts and University authorities.

The first generations of students who studied according to the "Bologna system" at the Faculty of Arts began their tertiary education in 2011. In order to scales successful use of ECTS and re-examine reality of awarded values, it was necessary to apply statistic method using the sample of minimum 30 students together with a constant control of quality, and on the basis of the data collected via students' questionnaires and comprehending the statistic data of the students' progress and their exam success.

ECTS credit points awarded to each course must be evaluated regularly in order to ensure their precise indicator of student's invested time.<sup>142</sup> Even after the first self-evaluation of study programs, the Commission for development of studying at the Faculty in the most of the answers by anonymous respondents in their questionnaires, which were referring to the evaluation of study programs, to the question „How much time did you need for preparing the subject contents“, found values that crossed the borderline values of ECTS awarded. Similar responses in approximate percentage were also gained in the following self-evaluation procedures. By statistic comparison of students' success in the exams, lower rate in regard to the students' success who studied according to the programs up to 2011 was found.<sup>143</sup>

### **RESTRUCTURING OF STUDY PROGRAMS IN 2015**

In the restructuring procedure of study programs at the Faculty of Arts in 2015, the contents were revised and reformed and previously awarded ECTS values re-examined. Expanding to two-terms subjects (basic subjects from the performing area), by ECTS award greater in number than the previous ones, and reduction of subject contents too, attempts to enable the students to more efficiently and flexibly complete their studies successfully, which is one of the Bologna declaration aims, is being done. Fully (not partly) standards for accreditation of study programs are fulfilled. Newly added value, 22 ECTS presents annual (30 per week) workload i.e. anticipates engagement in preparing the contents during 660 hours.<sup>144</sup>

Seemingly, an ideally conceptualised study program, which fulfills all the standards anticipated for accreditation. However, practice and experience show quite the opposite.

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<sup>142</sup>Vukasović M, Implementacija bolonjske deklaracije u Evropi pogled iz ugla studenata [Implementation of Bologna declaration in Europe from the students' view], Trend, Копаоник, 2003.  
[http://www.trend.uns.ac.rs/stskup/zbor\\_03/Radovi/t2-5.pdf](http://www.trend.uns.ac.rs/stskup/zbor_03/Radovi/t2-5.pdf)

<sup>143</sup>Извештаји о самовредновању Факултета уметности 2012–2015 [Reports of self-evaluation of Faculty of Arts 2012–2015]

<sup>144</sup>Документација за акредитацију студиских програма Факултета уметности [Documentation for accreditation of study programs of Faculty of Arts]  
<http://www.art.pr.ac.rs/index.php/studije/osnovne-akademske-studije/muzicki/izvodjacke-umetnosti-2.html>

## CONCLUSION

Our distinguished artist, pianist and a professor Aleksandar Serdar, in his book *Development of pianist technique*, says „ ... Hours of continuous, daily practice should be inseparable part of your living. It is the only way that all pieces of information in ... book may become a part of you with the aim of your deepest artistic expression“.<sup>145</sup>

Having in mind the aim of study programs – creation of musical personality – a performer of high professional level, this precious advice by professor Serdar should be the imperative of every future professional performer under the presumption that the future professional musical artist practices every day (makes preparations for the lectures) during one-term course, that is, two-terms subject, while by applying the formulae  $A: B = C$ , where A represents total number of hours measured by ECTS workload, B total number of weeks multiplied by 7 days, result of which is C, on the basis of which, we come to the conclusion that during the course each student should practice 3 hours daily. If we take into account that the program requirements of the subjects in the area of performing group of subjects are formed in accordance with abilities of each student, a question posed is - whether three hours of individual work are sufficient for each student to achieve competence – for an independent artistic activity and participation in the work of an ensemble?

If based on the advice of excellent experts-pedagogues and artists through the centuries, the answer to this question would be not be an affirmative one. Three hours of an independent work daily, is insufficient even for great and realized artists which have mastered repertoire. Is it realistic to expect that with such an engagement, which is anticipated for each student during four years of study, it is possible to achieve all the competencies required, and also expect him to be successful (that is, expect him to complete his studies in as short span of time as possible, which is one of the Bologna principles)?

Regardless of the fact that the process of self-evaluation is not conducted yet and the opinion of the students is not heard, on the basis of my a few decades long experience, I am sure that the answer is not affirmative one. With such independent engagement, the student could prepare much less subject content for achieving the original aim – a highly professional level, while by a reduction of subject content, competence of mastering repertoire would be reduced to a low level.

How can the issue of assessment and award of ECTS to art subjects in the field of Performing arts be realistically solved? An eventual enlargement will not help the curriculum to fulfill the standards required and classification by the type. Revision and exchange of standards for accreditation of study programs in this area would be beneficial, at any rate, to which end an eventual shared initiative of faculties for a revision and change of the standards for study programs in this area, which would be sent to the National Council for higher education would also be highly beneficial. This initiative would, certainly, be improved by students' opinion on the realistic estimation of ECTS, if the students of these study programs could be involved more actively in the process of self-evaluation and become more interested in the participation of ensuring quality improvement.

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<sup>145</sup> Aleksandar Serdar, Razvoj pijanističke tehnike [Development of pianist technique], Muzički centar Crne Gore, Podgorica, 2012.