

# New Zealand and the Bologna Process

New Zealand Government



## PURPOSE

This paper identifies areas of comparability between the European higher education reforms known as the Bologna Process and New Zealand's tertiary education system. It outlines action government agencies will take to enhance New Zealand's engagement with the Bologna Process at the system level. It also provides a framework within which New Zealand institutions can consider their own alignment to the Bologna Process.

## STRUCTURE

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## FOREWORD

Since its inception in 1999, the Bologna Process has had a significant impact on European higher education. As the implications of Bologna spread globally, it is important for New Zealand to engage with these higher education reforms.

Bologna provides New Zealand with an opportunity. We can use the Bologna framework to enhance our international connections and ensure our graduates can access study and labour opportunities around the world. Using Bologna's tools and practices, we can improve the recognition of New Zealand qualifications and the development of our quality assurance processes.

New Zealand's tertiary education system is already comparable to the Bologna ideal. Our three-level degree structure, Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, quality assurance standards, efforts at increasing participation in tertiary education, and policies that promote institutional autonomy, all closely align with the key elements of the Bologna Process.

Further work has been undertaken across the tertiary education system to build on this high level of comparability. New Zealand has acceded to the Lisbon Qualification Recognition Convention, is investigating the introduction of a Diploma Supplement, and is verifying the comparability of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications with Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications.

At the same time as enhancing our engagement with Bologna, we have also focused on ensuring our tertiary education system relates to other education systems around the world and maintains its own individual characteristics. The strength of New Zealand's tertiary education system is its commitment to national goals and to the communities it serves.

**Karen Sewell**  
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Ministry of Education

**Dr Karen Poutasi**  
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New Zealand Qualifications Authority

## INTRODUCTION

The Bologna Process describes the moves by which forty-six European countries are working towards greater consistency and mobility across their higher education systems. It has significant political support within Europe and applies to around 5,000 institutions hosting 31 million students. The Process has increasingly global implications in the field of higher education.

While New Zealand is not eligible to join the Bologna Process, it is important to engage with these higher education reforms. The Bologna Process will have implications for New Zealand degree-conferring tertiary education providers as we work to enhance our existing success and reputation as a provider of world-class education to both domestic and international students. Bologna is also likely to have a number of implications for the international acceptance of New Zealand tertiary education awards and options for student mobility.

New Zealand's tertiary education organisations have long recognised the need for their graduates to be able to move freely in the international arena for postgraduate educational opportunities and in the global labour market. Developing mechanisms for comparability with the Bologna Process will make institutional exchanges and collaboration easier, and provide institutions with a useful marketing tool in third countries.

In seeking to engage with the Bologna Process, both government agencies and tertiary education organisations recognise the independence of New Zealand's tertiary education system. The focus therefore, is not on ensuring compliance with the Bologna Process, but on ensuring that comparability mechanisms allow New Zealand's tertiary education system to relate to all major international models.

The New Zealand government's *International Education Agenda 2007-2012* and accompanying *Education Strategy for Engagement with Europe 2008-2011* identify the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area as key areas for New Zealand's education engagement with Europe. New Zealand's tertiary education organisations have also identified the Bologna Process as an area of importance as they seek to deepen their engagement with Europe.

At the Ministry of Education-hosted *Bologna Day* held in Wellington in February 2007, tertiary education representatives requested more information on the Bologna Process and how it relates to New Zealand. This paper was subsequently developed and then discussed at *Bologna Day 2008* in Wellington in May 2008, hosted by the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority. It was then reviewed by the Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat.

## BACKGROUND ON THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The Bologna Declaration, agreed by 31 European Higher Education Ministers from 29 countries on 19 June 1999, set in train the Bologna Process. Participating European countries sought to create an integrated European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010, characterised by enhanced student, academic and labour mobility and greater ease of comparability of higher education systems.

In spite of its voluntary nature and individual country implementation, the Bologna Process has brought about more change in higher education in Europe than any other international instrument or policy. The Bologna Process now involves 46 European countries and is increasingly likely to have global implications in the field of higher education.

The Bologna Declaration signatories are limited to those countries which have signed the Council of Europe's European Cultural Convention (1954).

### THE THINKING BEHIND THE REFORMS

The Bologna Process was initiated in an attempt to address perceived weaknesses in and between European higher education systems. It sought to improve student completion rates, the speed with which graduates could enter the labour market, and academic and labour market mobility between European countries. As the Process has developed, greater priority has been given to student mobility, and most recently to the development of global relationships.

### TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

The Bologna Process seeks to create the EHEA by 2010. The EHEA is not intended as a unitary European system of higher education. Rather, it is a 'space' in which national systems possess common key features, in which qualifications offered by institutions in the EHEA are easily recognised and assessed by institutions and employers for purposes of further study or employment, and in which there is a high level of mobility by students and staff.

Progress towards the creation of the EHEA is encouraged by biennial ministerial meetings and officials groups.

### BOLOGNA PROGRESS

The Bologna Process is progressed by biennial ministerial meetings at which an official statement is agreed outlining priorities for the coming years.

### SORBONNE DECLARATION

The precursor to the Bologna Declaration, the Sorbonne Declaration was agreed by Higher Education Ministers from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom on 25 May 1998. The Sorbonne Declaration laid the foundation for the Bologna Process by seeking the improvement of external recognition of national higher education systems to facilitate student mobility and employability.

### **BOLOGNA DECLARATION**

Signed by 31 Ministers of Higher Education from 29 countries, the 1999 Bologna Declaration committed signatories to six objectives, which together aim to establish the EHEA by 2010. These objectives are:

- The adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
- The adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles
- The establishment of a system of credits as a proper means of promoting student mobility
- The promotion of mobility
- The promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, and
- The promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education.

### **PRAGUE COMMUNIQUÉ**

In 2001, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to establish the EHEA by 2010 and added a focus on lifelong learning, and promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA to their work programme. They also expanded the Process to engage higher education institutions and students.

### **BERLIN COMMUNIQUÉ**

At the 2003 meeting, Ministers sought to speed up the realisation of the EHEA, and added a third cycle to the system to include doctorates.

### **BERGEN COMMUNIQUÉ**

In 2005, membership was extended from 40 countries to 45. Ministers adopted an overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA and committed to begin adapting national frameworks for qualifications by 2007 and completing the process by 2010.

### **LONDON COMMUNIQUÉ**

The 2007 London meeting saw Ministers commit to completing the existing Action Lines. They accepted plans for establishment of a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies and for the Bologna international strategy.

### **BENELUX MEETING**

The next meeting of Bologna Ministers is to be hosted by the Benelux countries in April 2009.

### **IMPLEMENTATION BY SUBSIDIARITY**

Implementation of the Bologna Process occurs through the model of subsidiarity – or individual country / state implementation. As a result, considerable variance in implementation exists between – and within – countries. The common language of Bologna and its tools have, however, improved transparency between systems.

A number of reporting mechanisms have been developed to measure progress across countries. For each biennial Ministers meeting:

- the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) of senior officials prepares a report on progress against specific initiatives requested in the previous Communiqué
- officials prepare a Stocktaking Report, based on country self-reporting and focused on legislative and regulatory progress
- the European University Association (EUA) reports on progress at institutional level, through analysis of survey responses, and a number of site visits
- the European Students' Union (ESU), provides a student perspective in their 'Bologna with Student Eyes' report.

Despite the considerable progress made to date, all parties agree that ongoing work will be necessary beyond 2010 to realise the goal of an integrated EHEA.

#### **BOLOGNA SIGNATORIES**

Membership of the Bologna Process is limited to countries which are signatories to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe. Following the 2007 ministerial meeting in London, forty-six European countries were signatories to the Bologna Process:

Albania	Estonia	Latvia	Russian Federation
Andorra	Finland	Liechtenstein	Serbia
Armenia	“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	Lithuania	Slovak Republic
Austria	France	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Azerbaijan	Georgia	Malta	Spain
Belgium	Germany	Moldova	Sweden
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Greece	Montenegro	Switzerland
Bulgaria	Holy See	Netherlands	Turkey
Croatia	Hungary	Norway	Ukraine
Cyprus	Iceland	Poland	United Kingdom
Czech Republic	Ireland	Portugal	
Denmark	Italy	Romania	

#### **PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS**

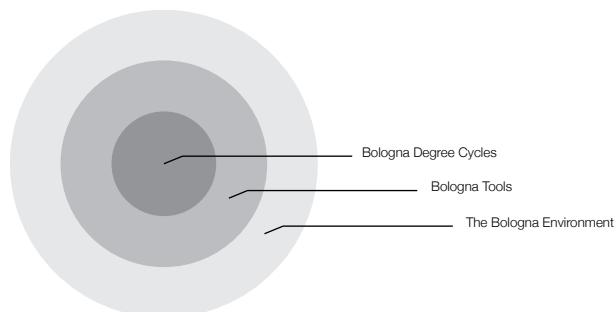
In addition the following organisations participate in the Bologna Process:

European Commission  
 Council of Europe  
 UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education  
 European University Association  
 European Association of Institutions in Higher Education  
 European Students' Union  
 European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education  
 Education International Pan-European Structure  
 Business Europe

The Bologna Process is not a European Union programme – membership is much wider than the EU and the EU has very limited ‘competence’ (or constitutional power) over education matters. However, the EU is a principal stakeholder in the Bologna Process and provides significant support to its development.



# THE BOLOGNA FRAME



## BOLOGNA CYCLE DEGREES

At the centre of the Bologna Process are uniform degree structures - a three cycle model equivalent to New Zealand's Bachelors / Masters / Doctorates degree structure – as illustrated in Table One.

T 1  
TABLE ONE  
BOLOGNA'S DEGREE CYCLES

<b>First Cycle</b>	Bachelors Degrees	Minimum of three years study; 180 ECTS or achieving the relevant EHEA Qualifications Framework outcomes.
<b>Second Cycle</b>	Masters Degrees	Generally two years study; 120 ECTS or achieving the relevant EHEA Qualifications Framework outcomes.
<b>Third Cycle</b>	Doctoral Degrees	Generally three years study; or meeting the relevant EHEA Qualifications Framework outcomes. Third cycle qualifications do not necessarily have credits associated with them.

## BOLOGNA TOOLS

To enable these degree cycles to work in a transparent and harmonious manner across Europe, a number of tools have been developed or adapted for use at institutional and country levels.

Foremost among these at the *institutional level* are the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement, already developed through the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Sitting behind these at the *national level* are tools regarding quality assurance, national qualifications frameworks, and commitments to widening access to higher education.

## BOLOGNA ENVIRONMENT

At the *pan-European level* Bologna includes promotion of a European factor in higher education, mobility for both staff and students, lifelong learning and the attractiveness of the EHEA beyond its borders.

Across all three levels there is a commitment to:

- engage with students to recognise they are central to developments, and
- expand the features of Bologna to lifelong learning beyond traditional higher education institutions.



# BOLOGNA DEGREE CYCLES

## PURPOSE

Bologna's degree cycles, stipulating three cycles of higher education degrees (Bachelors / Masters / Doctorates), were designed to enhance the comparability of degrees across Europe.

## ABOUT

At the heart of the Bologna Process has been the agreement to establish initially two and then three cycles of degrees. The original Bologna Declaration stated that the first cycle should last a minimum of three years. No length is specified for the second cycle (Masters) qualification.

Many Bologna signatory countries needed to make substantial changes to their systems in response to the Bologna Process. Continental higher education systems have moved to divide five and six year programmes into two cycles.

Table Two outlines the outcomes expected at each Bologna degree cycle. These descriptors, together with the ECTS credit ranges, form the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA which was adopted in Bergen in 2005. At the Bergen conference Ministers committed to ensuring that their national qualification frameworks become compatible with the EHEA framework.

T 2 **TABLE TWO**  
**BOLOGNA'S DEGREE OUTCOMES**

Outcomes	ECTS Credits
<b>First Cycle</b>	
<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</li> <li>• can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</li> <li>• have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</li> <li>• can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;</li> <li>• have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</li> </ul>	Typically include 180- 240 ECTS credits
<b>Second Cycle</b>	
<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</li> <li>• can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</li> <li>• have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments;</li> <li>• can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and nonspecialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;</li> <li>• have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</li> </ul>	120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle
<b>Third Cycle</b>	
<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</li> <li>• have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</li> <li>• have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</li> <li>• can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</li> <li>• can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.</li> </ul>	Not specified



## SIGNIFICANCE

Across Europe most institutions now offer courses based on a 3+2 model, or, where the undergraduate qualification is four years long, a 4+1 structure. All but three Bologna countries have the three-cycle structure in place. The move towards a common degree framework has captured the interest of countries outside Europe. While the United States is unlikely to change its degree structures, other countries are following the adoption of these reforms with interest.

## ISSUES

There is ongoing debate within Europe as to the most appropriate definition of a degree – whether it is defined by learning outcomes, ECTS credits or years.

There is debate as to whether Honours degrees and one year Masters degrees are consistent with the Bologna cycles.

At the Prague meeting in 2001, Ministers noted that “programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs.”

The UK Government “firmly believes that one year Taught Masters and four year Integrated Masters programmes are compatible with the Bologna framework”<sup>1</sup>. In its response to the 2007 Select Committee Inquiry, the UK Government advised that the “focus on learning outcomes has gained widespread acceptance with the Bergen Communiqué re-emphasising its importance by adopting the Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA, comprising generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes that focus on credit ranges rather than time periods.”<sup>2</sup>

A recent Royal Society of Chemistry comparative study of Anglo-Danish chemistry in higher education, however, found that there was insufficient opportunity within the UK’s 4 year MSci to achieve fully the descriptor outcomes at Masters level, especially in respect of project work.<sup>3</sup>

In 2006 Scotland and Ireland completed the process of verifying that their national higher education frameworks are compatible with that of the EHEA (see Table Three). In each of these cases the Honours degree was judged to be at the level of the first cycle. In both Scotland and Ireland the Honours degree is required for entry to Masters programmes, which then last for one year.

<sup>1</sup> UK Department for Education and Skills Bologna Process: Excellence through Engagement (2007).

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons The Bologna Process: Government Response to the Committee’s Fourth Report of Session 2006 – 2007 (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Evidence from the Royal Society of Chemistry to the Education and Skills Committee [www.rsc.org/images/RSCresponseTHEBOLOGNAPROCESSDec06\\_tcm18-75476.pdf](http://www.rsc.org/images/RSCresponseTHEBOLOGNAPROCESSDec06_tcm18-75476.pdf)

**T 3 TABLE THREE  
EHEA-SCOTLAND QUALIFICATIONS COMPATIBILITY**

<b>EHEA qualification cycles</b>	<b>Qualifications within the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Qualifications within the Irish National Framework of Qualifications<sup>5</sup></b>
Short cycle qualifications within or linked to the first cycle	Diploma of Higher Education	Higher Certificate
Intermediate awards within the first cycle	Certificate of Higher Education Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma	Higher Diploma
First cycle qualifications	Scottish Bachelors Degree Scottish Bachelors Degree with Honours	Ordinary Bachelor Degree Honours Bachelor Degree
Intermediate awards within the second cycle	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	Postgraduate Diploma
Second cycle qualifications	Masters Degree Integrated Masters Degree MPhil Degree	Masters Degree
Third cycle qualifications	Doctoral Degrees including Doctorates by research	Doctoral Degree

#### **NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

New Zealand degree structures are compatible with Bologna. Our Bachelor-Masters-Doctorate qualifications structure equates with Bologna's three cycles. Within the Bologna Process there is no further definition of course length other than that of a first cycle degree of not less than three years.

#### **FURTHER ACTION**

The Ministry of Education will continue to monitor the debate among the Bologna signatories regarding Honours degrees, one year Masters degrees and Integrated Masters degrees.

Tertiary education organisations (TEOs) may wish to examine how their own programme structures relate to the Bologna outcomes, including expectations of access to higher degrees.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Scotland\\_en.pdf](http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Scotland_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Ireland\\_en.pdf](http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Ireland_en.pdf)

# BOLOGNA TOOLS: EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION SYSTEM

## PURPOSE

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was designed to assist student mobility by helping European countries recognise periods of study abroad.

## ABOUT

ECTS is intended to make European study programmes easier to read and compare. It assigns credits to course components based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of the particular course of study. These objectives are usually described in terms of the learning outcomes of the course and the competences to be acquired.

The *workload* of a full-time student during one academic year is calculated to be 60 ECTS credits. Workload refers to the average time an average learner might be expected to need in order to reach the required *learning outcomes*. Learning outcomes are sets of *competences* expressing what the student will be expected to understand on completion of their studies. ECTS credits are only shown after appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Originally introduced as part of the Erasmus framework in 1989, ECTS was solely a credit transfer system. More recently, it has developed into a credit accumulation system to be implemented at institutional, regional, national and European levels. It is the only credit system which has been successfully used across Europe. It ties in closely with the Bologna Process objective of establishing a system of credits for the EHEA.

## ISSUES

*Trends V*, the European University Association study of the implementation progress of Bologna provided for the 2007 Ministers meeting in London, identified a range of issues with the implementation of ECTS. It reported that while almost 75 per cent of institutions reported use of ECTS as a transfer system and over 66 per cent as an accumulation system, incorrect or superficial use of ECTS is currently still widespread.

Students still report difficulties in having the full value of study outside their home institution being recognised. They may, for example, study a full year programme at another institution but have only 40 ECTS credits recognised toward their degree by their home institution.

A grading system was developed for ECTS particularly to support credit transfer, however there are few examples of its use in practice.

Rather than adopt the ECTS, some countries – for example, the United Kingdom – use their own credit and accumulation systems, especially where these are compatible with ECTS.

**NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

While other countries in Europe have varying definitions and minimum student learning hours for an academic year, there is no requirement in the Bologna Process for any minimum student learning hours. New Zealand's system, based on a workload of 120 credits per year, is thus technically compatible with ECTS.

New Zealand and the European Commission are funding an academic mobility project. This project allows tertiary students to complete part of their qualification at a participating European institution. This project follows on from a pilot established in 2004. One of that pilot's objectives was to examine the compatibility of credit transfer systems between New Zealand and the European Union. No problems in compatibility have been identified to date.

TEOs may wish to ensure that credit transfer arrangements currently made for European exchange students reflect the comparability of the two systems.

## **BOLOGNA TOOLS: DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT**

**PURPOSE**

The Diploma Supplement aims to assist the recognition of qualifications by providing information describing the qualification in a standard format designed to be easily understood and straightforward to compare.

**ABOUT**

The Diploma Supplement is primarily used as a recognition instrument. It is one of the main tools of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The Diploma Supplement is a document issued to all students by higher education institutions on the successful completion of any higher education qualification. It contains information on the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were undertaken and successfully completed by the student. The Diploma Supplement includes a section which explains the higher education system in which the qualification was awarded.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

Students from Europe are increasingly likely to require a Diploma Supplement as recognition of their studies regardless of the country of study. Institutions in the United Kingdom are in the process of adopting Diploma Supplements for all graduates. The Australian Federal Government has undertaken a number of pilots aimed at seeking the adoption of a Diploma Supplement by its higher education institutions, promoting it as a 'graduate passport'.

## ISSUES

The Bologna signatory countries committed themselves to the introduction of the Diploma Supplement in 2003. However the 2007 *Trends V* report identified that slightly less than half of the survey's respondents confirmed that they issued the Diploma Supplement to all graduating students. The views of these respondents suggest that the Diploma Supplement is perceived as a valuable tool for international mobility or the international labour market, but with less relevance locally.<sup>6</sup>

### NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY

New Zealand's application to accede to the Lisbon Recognition Convention was unanimously approved in June 2007. New Zealand's Instrument of Accession was deposited at the end of 2007. The Convention has entered into force for New Zealand from 1 February 2008.

The Convention requires government to promote the use of a Diploma Supplement or equivalent by its higher education institutions. The Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) have initiated a project to investigate the desirability and feasibility of introducing a Diploma Supplement or equivalent for New Zealand tertiary institutions.

A Diploma Supplement or equivalent for New Zealand is expected to be a valuable tool for international student mobility and international labour market access.

### FURTHER ACTION

The ministry and NZQA are consulting with relevant stakeholders through the Diploma Supplement Reference Group on what would be involved in the development and implementation of a Diploma Supplement or equivalent for New Zealand.

TEOs are invited to work with NZQA on this development, and to consider the ways a Diploma Supplement or equivalent could help their institution's international strategy.

<sup>6</sup> European Universities Association Trends V (2007) p 43.

### THE LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION

The Council of Europe – UNESCO *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* is a multilateral legal framework for the improved international recognition of higher education qualifications and periods of study.

The central precept of the Convention stipulates that degrees and periods of study must be recognised unless substantial differences can be proved by the institution that is charged with recognition. Alternately, the institution can request the person seeking the recognition to obtain an assessment (a written appraisal) of their qualification or period of study.

The Convention was adopted at a diplomatic conference in Lisbon in April 1997. In their Berlin Communiqué of 2003, the Ministers of Education of the Bologna Process called upon all parties to the Bologna Process to ratify the Convention.

New Zealand practice already accords with the principles of the Convention. In 2007 the New Zealand government requested the ability to accede to the Convention, which was approved by the Convention's Accession Committee on 20 June 2007. In December 2007 the New Zealand government deposited its instrument of accession, formally joining the Convention. The Convention entered into force for New Zealand from 1 February 2008.

## BOLOGNA TOOLS: QUALITY ASSURANCE

### PURPOSE

The *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and the European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies* are designed to assure the quality of European qualifications.

### ABOUT

In 2005 Ministers adopted the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* developed by the 'E4' (European Universities Association (EUA), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Students Union (ESU)). It covers standards for internal and external quality assurance arrangements for higher education institutions, internal quality assurance standards for quality assurance agencies, cyclical reviews of national quality assurance agencies, and a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies.

In 2007 Ministers adopted recommendations on the establishment of a *European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies*. The purpose of the Register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. Application for entry on the Register is available to any agency which 'operates in the EHEA', including those based outside its borders. Applications for inclusion on the Register will be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the Guidelines, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities where required.



The Register was officially launched in March 2008, and will publish a list of agencies that comply with the European Standards and Guidelines for the first time in 2008. The website of the register is available at [www.eqar.eu](http://www.eqar.eu).

#### **SIGNIFICANCE**

Quality assurance plays a central role in achieving the Bologna objective to enhance the quality and international competitiveness of European higher education. European cooperation in quality assurance will make it easier to compare qualifications across Europe. Ministers have consistently stressed that primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with each institution. They have also set down requirements for national quality assurance systems.

#### **ISSUES**

While agreement to the establishment of national quality assurance authorities and processes was an early Bologna commitment, agreement to the establishment of a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies has been more problematic, as it goes beyond the principle of subsidiarity.

The European Standards and Guidelines represent best practice in quality assurance. For many Bologna countries this is a new initiative. It is unlikely that newly created agencies will be able to demonstrate that they meet these standards for some years. Their absence from the Register may cause ongoing tension among Bologna countries as being listed on the Register takes on increasing significance.

#### **NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

In New Zealand degree level programmes and the providing institutions accredited to deliver them are approved by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) and NZQA. Both organisations have been examining their practices in the context of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Having New Zealand's quality assurance agencies included on the Register would be a useful way of benchmarking our performance, and would enhance our international reputation. It would remove one difficulty in the approval of joint degree programmes with European higher education institutions. Discussions on this process have begun with the EUA.

#### **FURTHER ACTION**

NZQA and NZVCC are currently examining their approval practices against the European Standards and Guidelines. Discussions have commenced with the European authorities with respect to inclusion on the Register.

TEOs may wish to consider how compatibility would be useful in gaining approval for joint degrees.

# BOLOGNA TOOLS: QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

## PURPOSE

Qualifications frameworks are designed to provide coherence to qualifications within education systems by indicating the range of qualifications and the ways in which learners can navigate between them.

## ABOUT

In their Berlin Communiqué of 2003, Ministers encouraged *member states* to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which would seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. Ministers also undertook to elaborate an *overarching framework* of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

Underlying the developmental work for the EHEA framework is an agreement that four main purposes of higher education can be identified:

- Preparation for the labour market
- Preparation for life as active citizens in a democratic society
- Personal development
- The development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

National qualifications frameworks can make explicit the purposes and aims of qualifications, by their clear description through the articulation of the learning outcomes, and by clarifying any rights to professional practice and recognition associated with them.

Criteria and processes have been developed for verification that national frameworks are compatible with the EHEA framework. The criteria include the focus on learning outcomes, links to ECTS credits, and appropriate national quality assurance systems. The process for certification of compatibility is managed by the individual countries using a model of self-review involving international experts.

Once the self-certification process has been completed, countries include information on the link between their national framework and the European framework in Diploma Supplements issued thereafter.

## SIGNIFICANCE

As national qualification frameworks are certified as compatible with the overarching EHEA framework, those looking to recognise qualifications (whether for immigration, employment, or entry to higher education opportunities) will have a common reference point.

## ISSUES

At the same time the European Commission has been developing a *European Qualifications Framework*, designed to cover all post-compulsory education, including vocational, professional and academic qualifications. While the Commission is clear that it sees the EHEA framework as a fully coherent subset of the EQF, this position is not fully accepted by member countries or higher education organisations.

**NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

New Zealand's Register of Quality Assured Qualifications operates as the equivalent of a National Qualifications Framework within Europe. The key purposes of New Zealand's Register are to:

- clearly identify all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand
- ensure that all qualifications have a purpose and relation to each other that students and the public can understand
- maintain and enhance learners' ability to transfer credit by the establishment of a common system of credit, and
- enhance and build on the international recognition of New Zealand qualifications.

Qualifications listed on the Register must be described in terms of title, outcome statements, level and credit, and must show which organisation was responsible for their quality assurance.

New Zealand's National Qualifications Framework (NQF), comprising unit and achievement standards, continues to be a key subset of the Register.

**FURTHER ACTION**

NZQA is working with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland to examine the comparability of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications with the Irish Qualifications Framework, initially for degree level and above. The Irish Authority has already completed its process of self-certification against the EHEA Framework. This comparability exercise will provide a useful measure of New Zealand's general comparability with both the EHEA Framework and the EQF.

New Zealand's experience of working with the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications has offered an opportunity to contribute to European discussions. Through these contributions the profile of New Zealand tertiary education, and its comparability with Bologna, has been raised.

TEOs may wish to highlight information on the Register and its levels in materials being provided to potential European and other international partners.

# THE BOLOGNA ENVIRONMENT: LIFELONG LEARNING AND WIDENING ACCESS

## PURPOSE

The lifelong learning agenda challenges institutions to enable a broader range of individuals to fulfil their potential.

## ABOUT

The majority of European countries have some system of classification of qualifications that has tended to act as a barrier between different levels or types of learning. Few institutions have developed flexible learning paths, and the accreditation of work placements, blended learning, company in-house training, distance education, e-learning and learning through work schemes are patchy and still require formal integration within mainstream higher education provision.

In the 2005 Bergen Communiqué Ministers recognised the need for governments to take measures to help students, especially those from socially disadvantaged groups. Ministers focused on providing financial and economic assistance, and guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access.

As the Bologna Process has continued to develop, the importance of dialogue with a wider range of stakeholders has become significantly more important. In particular the European Students' Union, representing the students associations in each of the Bologna countries, has been represented in all discussions.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Economic imperatives and changing demographics in Europe have highlighted the need for a more effective workforce for the creation of knowledge societies. Ageing societies, smaller birth cohorts of younger generations and the dramatic increase in representation of women in student populations are making major impacts on the makeup of the current workforce and their learning needs.

## ISSUES

While rhetoric on lifelong learning has been a constant feature of policy discussion throughout the Bologna period, action has been slow to follow.

#### **NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

The New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy 2007 – 2012 sets ‘Success for all New Zealanders through Lifelong Learning’ as an expected contribution of tertiary education. It identifies five specific areas of focus for improved achievement:

- Ensuring maximum educational opportunity for all New Zealanders
- Strong foundations skills
- Successful transitions from schooling
- Building relevant skills and competencies for productivity and innovation, and
- Building skills and competencies for social and cultural development.

Over the period of this Strategy tertiary education organisations need to address the disparities that exist for populations such as Māori, Pasifika peoples, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and people needing to upskill in order to re-enter the workforce.

It would seem then that European and New Zealand governments and institutions share similar agendas in this area, further dialogue and the identification of mutual learning opportunities would help put these into action.

New Zealand’s engagement with wider stakeholder groups is well founded in the tertiary system, from the rights of student bodies to be involved in the governing councils of individual TEOs to the consultation with national student bodies in developing policies and practices.

The engagement of broader business and community stakeholders in governance of tertiary education in New Zealand is an element which is generally further advanced than in Bologna countries.

#### **FURTHER ACTION**

This element is likely to provide a focus for policy discussions at the bilateral level, with Bologna countries as a group, and in multilateral fora for some time.

TEOs may wish to include discussion of ways to encourage lifelong learning and widen access in their discussions with European partners.

Stakeholder organisations representing staff, students, business, and community groups, may wish to discuss their engagement with tertiary education in New Zealand in meetings with their international peers.

## THE BOLOGNA ENVIRONMENT: THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

### PURPOSE

Signatories to the Bologna Process must also be signatories to the European Cultural Convention, which aims to develop the common cultural heritage of Europe, to safeguard and realise the ideals and principles which are its common heritage.

### ABOUT

The Bologna Declaration called for the promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research. Two years later in Prague, Ministers called for the strengthening of the European dimensions, with increased development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with “European” content, orientation or organisation.

By Berlin in 2003, Ministers stressed the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes, as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning. They agreed to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees.

### SIGNIFICANCE

At a simple level, the European dimension provides a geographic boundary for the Bologna Process. More substantively though, the European dimension seeks to realise the aims of the European Cultural Convention in higher education, in particular through developing a greater understanding of one another among the people of Europe.

### ISSUES

The *Trends V* report found it was as difficult in 2007 as it had been in 1999 to find evidence that the “European dimension” of higher education is becoming a tangible aspect of institutional reality.

#### **NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

While clearly not engaging in a 'European dimension' approach, the goals of New Zealand's International Education Agenda provide a lens through which we may view the Bologna signatories' approach to the European dimension. The Agenda's focus is on New Zealand students being equipped to thrive in an inter-connected world, and international students being enriched by their education and living experiences in New Zealand.

New Zealand also encourages international components in study programmes. About 800 New Zealand tertiary students went on an overseas exchange or study programme in 2007. This figure, while probably conservative, is relatively low compared with other countries, especially those in continental Europe. Reasons given for low participation include language barriers, cost, lack of awareness of opportunities, and confusion around student loan policy. New Zealand also has a culture of young people taking an 'OE' following graduation. The Ministry of Education contracted research looking at ways to encourage higher take-up of international components, which was released in 2008.<sup>7</sup>

#### **FURTHER ACTION**

European and New Zealand governments and institutions share parallel agendas in this area. Further dialogue and the identification of mutual learning opportunities would be helpful to develop models of how this might happen and the relative contributions of government agencies and institutions.

TEOs may wish to consider how they support the development of international competences in their graduates, including both opportunities for periods of international study, and gaining maximum benefit from 'internationalisation at home'.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Education, Research Project on International Student Exchanges – Sending our Students Overseas (2008) <http://educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/19688>

# THE BOLOGNA ENVIRONMENT: BOLOGNA'S INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

## PURPOSE

A key objective at the outset of the Bologna reforms was to promote the attractiveness of European higher education. The International Strategy formalises the 'external dimension' of the Bologna Process.

## ABOUT

At their London meeting in 2007, Ministers adopted the strategy *The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting*. This commits them to:

- improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA
- strengthening cooperation based on partnership
- intensifying policy dialogue, and
- improving recognition.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The Bologna reforms have created considerable interest in many parts of the world, and stimulated discussion between European and international partners on a range of issues. These include the recognition of qualifications, the benefits of cooperation and the underlying values of the Bologna Process. Efforts have been made in some countries in other parts of the world to bring their higher education systems more closely in line with the Bologna framework. The International Strategy provides countries external to the Bologna Process with an opportunity to further engage with the reforms.

## ISSUES

Increasing the attractiveness of European higher education is one of the core principles of the Bologna Process. However some Bologna countries (e.g. the United Kingdom) already have a very strong brand internationally. Germany, France and the Netherlands are all investing considerably in their national positioning in the global community.



**NEW ZEALAND COMPARABILITY**

The work programme of *the European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting* provides opportunities for New Zealand to engage with the full range of European countries involved in the Bologna Process.

The Ministry of Education's Education Counsellor for Europe was invited to be a panelist at the London Ministerial meeting representing countries outside the EHEA to speak on New Zealand's perceptions of and interests in the EHEA. Following on from this the Counsellor has been invited to speak at pan-European and national level meetings on the same topic. These meetings highlighted New Zealand's comparability with Bologna's structures and to registered our interest in benchmarking New Zealand's qualifications framework and quality assurance regimes against those being established in the EHEA.

**FURTHER ACTION**

New Zealand's accession to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the subsequent engagement with the network of European National Recognition and Information Centres provides a further set of opportunities to profile New Zealand in the European region.

TEOs may wish to identify priority areas which they would wish to see profiled.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### **BOLOGNA PROCESS**

Bologna Secretariat:  
[www.ond.vlaanderen.be](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be)

European University Association:  
[www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)

European Students' Union:  
[www.esib.org](http://www.esib.org)

### **NEW ZEALAND**

Ministry of Education:  
[www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)

New Zealand Qualifications Authority:  
[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)

New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications:  
[www.kiwiquals.govt.nz](http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz)

New Zealand Educated:  
[www.nzeducated.com](http://www.nzeducated.com)

Tertiary Education Commission:  
[www.tec.govt.nz](http://www.tec.govt.nz)