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‘MMT’: BUILDING A TOOL FOR A COMPULSORY MOBILITY PROGRAMME

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1. ABSTRACT

The main goal of this project is to reduce and eliminate barriers to European mobility in Higher Education. To do so, we plan to design an online tool which will allow access to all the information relevant to mobility. As mobility has grown at the UPF, information has been added for different users in different places. Our aim is to make the information easily accessible for all those involved in mobility, both incoming and outgoing, in accordance with the Erasmus charter. That means that the information must also be easy to update. The final product will be an open resource tool available to all European universities, and we expect it to facilitate Higher Education mobility by making information more easily available and updated.

2. KEYWORDS

Mobility Strategies; European Exchange Programme; Open resource tools

3. KNOWLEDGE AREA

Arts and Humanities

4. SUBJECT AREAS OF PREFERENCE

- Cooperation in and for Knowledge
- Internationalization of Universities

5. MODALITY

Poster Presentation

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6. DEVELOPMENT

The focus of this project is on mobility strategies and removal of barriers to mobility in higher education. Projects under this priority shall support activities to develop innovative strategies to boost mobility or ways to remove obstacles to mobility in higher education.

We have identified four main barriers to be removed:

1) **Trimester / Semester systems:** students on exchange for part of the academic year, moving between the two systems find it difficult to complete the number of ECTS credits they need, as showed below:

30 ECTS		30 ECTS	
20 ECTS	20 ECTS		20 ECTS

The problems involved need to be fully analysed:

- a) Teaching Period
- b) Examination Period

Possible solutions:

- a) Students could sit the examinations for one university while at another university (at the same time and on the same day as they are being held at the examining university) so as to avoid making them return to / or remain at the examining university.

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b) Students could receive partial credit for the ongoing assessment of courses which they can only attend partially.

2) Different credit systems:

Have all the universities in the project include ECTS credits on all public information regarding course open to Erasmus students and on transcripts (possibly in addition to their own credit systems). This solution also makes use of an existing tool under the EHEA.

3) Different systems for marks:

- a) Analyze the systems used
- b) See whether there is a standard European system of equivalence among the various systems.

We find two possible solutions:

- a) If there is not a standard European system of equivalence among the various systems, we can establish one
- b) Have all the universities in the project agree upon a standard system for marks (possibly in addition to their own system)

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The ECTS grading scale is based on the class percentile (similar, but not identical to the class rank) of a student in a given assessment, that is how he/she performed relative to other students in the same class (or in a significant group of students). The ECTS system classifies students into broad groups and thus makes interpretation of ranking simpler. This grouping is the core of the ECTS grading system.

The ECTS system initially divides students between pass and fail groups, and then assesses the performance of these two groups separately. Those obtaining passing grades are divided into five subgroups: the best 10% are awarded an A-grade, the next 25% a B-grade, the following 30% a C-grade, the following 25% a D-grade and the final 10% an E-grade.

Those who have not achieved a performance sufficient to allow a passing grade are divided into two subgroups: FX (Fail – some more work required before credit can be awarded) and F (Fail – considerable further work is required). This distinction allows differentiation between those students who have been assessed as almost passing and those who have clearly lacked the required knowledge and skills.

This system can be represented in a table, as follows:

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Grade	best/next	Definition
A	outstanding performance with only minor errors	
B	above the average standard but with some errors	
C	generally sound work with a number of notable errors	
D	fair but with significant shortcomings	
E	performance meets the minimum criteria	
FX		Fail - some more work required before the credit can be awarded
F		Fail - considerable further work is required

Ects Users' Guide: "The use of words like “excellent” or “good” is no longer recommended as they do not fit with percentage based ranking of the ECTS Grade Transfer Scale."

Since the passing and failing groups are evaluated separately, indicating the percentage of students who failed a course unit/module is not obligatory, but transparency is increased if the percentage failure rate for each course graded is given. It is recommended that these rates be included in the Transcript of Records.

However, many national grading scales are still widely used in local contexts. Just to see a few examples of those other grading systems, the following table is presented:

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Equivalency to other grade systems

ECTS Scale	U.S. Grade (4.0 scale) equivalents	British Grade equivalents	BERN (Swiss) Grade equivalents	Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich Grade equivalents	Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland
A	A- to A+ (4.0)	70 or over	6	1.0 & 1.3 (or 92-100%)	5,0 (<i>bardzo dobry</i>)
B	B to B+	60 - 69	5.5	1.7, 2.0 & 2.3 (or 83-91%)	4,5 (<i>dobry plus</i>)
C	C- to B (3.0)	55 - 59	5	2.7 & 3.0 (or 79-82%)	4,0 (<i>dobry</i>)
D	D+	50 - 54	4.5	3.3 (or 73-77%)	3,5 (<i>dostateczny plus</i>)
E	D- to D	40 - 49	4	3.7 & 4.0 (or 69-72%)	3,0 (<i>dostateczny</i>)
FX	F	30 - 39	3.5	4.1 (<i>*depends on faculty</i>)	2,0 (<i>niedostateczny</i>)
F	F	Below 30	3		

4) Credit granted to students on exchange.

Requisites need to be analysed. It seems that two main different systems are used:

- a) Students are granted overall credit for their exchange. They therefore do not need to match the courses they take on exchange to courses offered at their home universities. Marks are dealt with in several different ways:

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- i) Students do not need to take home marks (or pass courses). Certain universities base their marks on additional work to be carried out by students and assessed by the home university.
 - ii) Students are given the average of the marks obtained.
 - iii) Students are given the average of the best marks obtained.
 - i) And other systems
- b) Students are granted credit on a course-by-course basis, only for courses that match those required by their home degree program.

Problem: It seems that the criteria applied is based on course titles and course descriptions, and it is often difficult or impossible for students to find courses on exchange that match those courses required by their home degree programs. For example, a student required to take an Italian-English translation course will not find an equivalent course at the UPF.

Possible solution: It seems that the criteria of competencies as a basis for establishing equivalencies among courses would allow students a broader selection of courses. This solution also makes use of an existing tool under the EHEA.

In the example given above, a student could be granted credit for a translation course involving different languages provided that the same competencies were attained.

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Despite the convergence encouraged by the EHEA, cultural differences do remain. One of the advantages of the mobility program is that students have the opportunity to experience a university system in another culture. However, this is not generally the case for teachers. Teachers could be encouraged to incorporate approaches, methods and activities from other cultures by taking full advantage of the students' experiences. To do so, a "debriefing" system could be set up, through which students could analyse and share their experiences from abroad, including examples of the activities they carried out on exchange. The benefits of such a system would be twofold. On one hand students could become more aware of the advantages of the pedagogical knowledge acquired on their exchange, and thus continue using this knowledge upon their return. On the other hand, this knowledge could be shared with the home university teachers, thus providing them with new ideas for their classes. This could lead to exchanges among colleagues from different countries, that is, from different pedagogical traditions. Promoting educational convergence in this way would also help students to more readily integrate into their exchange university system, thus removing or diminishing such a barrier to their mobility.

To do so, we plan to design an online Mobile Management Tool (MMT) which will allow access to the above-mentioned information relevant to mobility.

Several different groups of users will have access to the information, with certain areas restricted to specific groups. For example, for the administration within the university, we will include information such as the international academics and officers, in charge of and mobility, as well as admissions forms, learning agreements, arrival and departure certificates, language level

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accreditation, and transcripts. Partner universities, students, advisors and international officers will have access to regulations, course catalogs, timetables, etc.

We also plan to include a space for socializing, so that students who have returned from their exchange can get together with future outgoing students, and incoming students can be in touch with outgoing UPF students from past or future exchanges.

We would like to develop this project with a pilot group of partner universities so that each partner can bring to the project the ideas and solutions that they have already developed for improving mobility and removing barriers to mobility. Among other resources, the UPF will be providing the technology to carry out the project, including an IT person designing the online tool. This cooperation will allow us to share and develop a common model, built on the experience of the pilot group.

Once we have developed the initial project, partners will then use the MMT for both internal and inter-partner administration. At this point the goal will be to assess the results and provide feedback for improvement.

Once these improvements have been made, a larger group of partner universities will be invited to take part in the project by incorporating the MMT into their own systems. Hopefully feedback from partners not involved in the initial project will allow us to carry out the fine tuning necessary so that the tool can be used by any European university interested in exchanging students within the framework of a Mobility Programme.

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