



European  
Commission

**ECTS Label  
DS Label**

**GUIDELINES FOR  
APPLICANTS**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 ECTS label

The **ECTS label** is awarded to Higher Education Institutions who demonstrate excellence in applying the principles of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Applicants are encouraged to consult the ECTS Users Guide carefully when preparing their Label application, as it provides guidelines for the correct implementation of ECTS, including an explanation of ECTS key features.

The ECTS Users Guide is available on-line at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf)

ECTS Label applications must provide evidence that excellence is achieved in two main areas:

1. Information Package/Course Catalogue published on the applicant's website in English;
2. Student files for both incoming and outgoing students.

Both these components of the ECTS Label application must be deemed to be of high quality for the award of an ECTS Label.

### 1.2 DS label

The **Diploma Supplement (DS) label** is awarded to Higher Education Institutions which deliver a Diploma Supplement to all graduates in all first and second cycle programmes offered by that institution, in accordance with the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

DS Label applications must demonstrate that all the elements of the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO are included. This template must be respected throughout. Applicants are encouraged to consult carefully the Diploma Supplement Explanatory Notes (Annex 2 of the DS application form) when preparing their Label application.

More information is available on-line at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm)

DS Label applications must provide evidence of best practice in two main areas:

1. Public information relating to the Diploma Supplement on the applicant's website (in English and in the home language);
2. Examples of actual Diploma Supplements issued to graduates from the applicant institution.

### 1.3 Renewal of ECTS & DS labels awarded to HEIs in 2009 & 2010, expiring in 2013

For those **Higher Education Institutions awarded an ECTS and/or a DS label in 2009 and 2010**, which wish to apply for a **renewal of their label for the period 2013-2016**, a renewal procedure has been established.

The purpose of the renewal procedure is to confirm that the quality standards ensured by the institutions awarded an ECTS/DS Label in 2009 or 2010 can be still reconfirmed in 2013.

Applications for the renewal procedure for ECTS/DS labels can be submitted only by an institution awarded an ECTS and/or a DS label in 2009 or 2010 expiring in 2013.

Specific application forms and assessment criteria, mentioned below, have been defined for the renewal procedure.

The submission procedure and the role played by National Agencies is the same for both 'new' applications and 'renewal' applications.

## **2. Submission of applications**

### **2.1 Period of validity of the ECTS/DS labels**

Once approved, the ECTS and DS labels remain valid from **2013 to 2016**.

### **2.2 Eligible countries**

In order to be eligible, applicant institutions must be located within the EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Croatia or Turkey.

### **2.3 Eligible institutions**

Applications for the ECTS/DS labels can be submitted by an institution which has been awarded a Standard or an Extended Erasmus University Charter (Standard Charter and Student placements).

In case the applicant is a higher education institution with different branches, but holding a single EUC, the application must clearly show that all branches comply with the applicable rules of either ECTS or DS.

### **2.4 Language of the application**

To be eligible, the application for the ECTS/DS labels must be submitted to the National Agency concerned and prepared in one of the official languages of the European Union: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Slovak, Slovene or Swedish.

### **2.5 Where to obtain the application forms**

The National Agency of the applicant will provide the application forms. Each applicant should contact the National Agency of its own country for the application forms and guidelines for applicants. National Agencies' contacts are published on: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lip/national-agencies\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lip/national-agencies_en.htm)

Samples of the application forms, eligibility and assessment sheets, are published only for information purposes on: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/support\\_measures\\_and\\_network/ects\\_dsl\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/support_measures_and_network/ects_dsl_en.php)

## **2.6 Deadline for submission**

**Preliminary applications** should be sent by the applicants to the National Agency concerned by **1 June 2013**.

National Agencies will review all applications and provide counselling and recommendations to applicants, in order to ensure compliance with Label criteria. The applicant will have the opportunity to further improve the application, based on the comments of the NAs.

The final revised application must be sent by the applicants to the National Agencies (date to be confirmed by the respective NA).

The National Agencies will then forward all final applications in paper versions and electronic versions, for assessment to EACEA in Brussels, by **1 October 2013 (as per postmark)**.

## **2.7 Application package and number of copies to be submitted**

Applicants must submit their (preliminary and final) application for the ECTS/DS labels by using the **official application form**, which is provided by their National Agency.

When submitting the preliminary and final application, applicants must send one **complete original version** of the application, including all annexes, **duly signed** by the legal representative of the applicant organisation and **two identical copies** of the original application form, including all annexes.

Applicants must send an **electronic version** of their (preliminary and final) application to their National Agency.

## **2.8 Acknowledgement of receipt and review of applications**

After submitting their application, applicants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt from the National Agency via e-mail sent to the e-mail address provided in section 1.1 of the application form.

After receiving the preliminary application, the National Agency will provide feedback on the application and advice applicants on how to improve their application. On the basis of this feedback, applicants finalise their application and submit the final version to the NA, as described under point 2.7. The NA will not provide any further feedback to the applicant on the final version of the application.

The feedback of the NA on the preliminary application will not be forwarded to the final evaluation panel; therefore any comment received by the NA in this counselling phase will not be binding for the final evaluators and for the members of the evaluation committee.

The selection procedure is described under section 4 of the present Guidelines.

## **2.9 Contact point for further information**

Any questions relating to the application must be addressed to the relevant National Agency: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/national-agencies\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/national-agencies_en.htm)

### 3. Structure of the application forms

There are two different application forms, one for the ECTS label and one for the DS label. Both application forms consist of three sections. They also both contain annexes with important information for applicants, including a list of **common pitfalls** (i.e., reasons for which applications were considered unsuccessful in 2009, 2010, 2011 & 2012).

The three sections in the application form are as follows:

- a first section for the identification of the applicant institution and provision of contact details. The contact information provided in this section will be used in all subsequent correspondence. Please notify any changes in this information if necessary (e.g. change of rector, etc.)
- a second section in which the applicant institution is asked to provide the documents/information which will be assessed for the award of the ECTS/DS labels;
- a third section which must be signed by the legal representative of the applicant institution.

These three sections are embedded in the following structure:

#### **3.1 Structure of the ECTS label application form**

##### *Section 1 – Identification*

1.1 Applicant institution – legal representative

1.2 Applicant institution – ECTS coordinator

##### *Section 2 – Documents required*

2.1 Information package/Course catalogue

2.2. Confirmation

2.3. Additional information

2.4 Complete ECTS student files (for three outgoing students and three incoming students)

##### *Section 3 - Declaration*

#### **3.2 Structure of the DS label application form**

##### *Section 1 – Identification*

1.1 Applicant institution – legal representative

1.2 Applicant institution – DS coordinator

##### *Section 2 – Documents required*

2.1 Examples of Diploma Supplement issued

2.2 Confirmation

2.3 Public information on the Diploma Supplement

2.4. Additional information

##### *Section 3 – Declaration*

### **3.3 Structure of the ECTS / DS renewal forms**

Both specific application forms for the renewal of the ECTS and/or DS consist of three sections.

The three sections in the application form are as follows:

- a first section for the identification of the applicant institution and provision of contact details;
- a second section in which the applicant institution is asked to confirm that all the documents/information required to renew the ECTS/DS labels is available;
- a third section which must be signed by the legal representative of the applicant institution.

## **4. Selection procedure**

The selection procedure for applications will consist of the following stages:

- 1) National Agencies in the applicant's country receive the preliminary applications by 1 June 2013.
- 2) Feedback of National Agencies and counselling to the applicants.
- 3) The applicants revise the applications and submit them to the National Agencies.
- 4) National Agencies submit all finalised applications to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels by 1 October 2013 (as per postmark). All final applications will be assessed by a panel of external experts at European level. The selection decision will be taken by the Evaluation Committee consisting of members of EACEA and the European Commission, before the end of the year.

### **4.1 Information on approved applications**

EACEA will inform all applicants individually by official letter providing detailed feedback on the assessment results.

After the date of receipt of the notification letter by email, applicants will have 30 days to submit a motivated appeal.

The final results will be published on the Executive Agency's website at [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lfp/results\\_projects/selection\\_results\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lfp/results_projects/selection_results_en.php)

Successful applicants will receive the ECTS/DS labels signed by the Executive Agency and the European Commission.

## **5. Eligibility criteria**

- NAs submit the paper version of the application by post to EACEA by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 (as per postmark).
- The paper version of the application form is duly certified by the authorised legal representative of the applicant institution.

- The application is submitted in one of the official European languages.
- The applicant is a holder of a Standard or an Extended Erasmus University Charter (Standard Charter and Student placements), valid until the end of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

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- Only for those HEIs applying for the renewal procedure: the applicant has been awarded an ECTS and/or a DS label in 2009 or 2010, expiring in 2013.

## 6. Assessment criteria

These guidelines refer to “**certified files/copies**”. Certification is to be given by means of one official stamp, the signature of the authorised person of the institution and the date of certification by the applicant institution (once for each ECTS student file/DS copy provided)<sup>1</sup>. Applications that are not correctly certified will be considered not acceptable.

### **6.1 Quality criteria for the ECTS label**

The criteria for the award of the ECTS label are:

- An Information Package/Course Catalogue in English which covers the items in the checklist for the Information Package/Course Catalogue and is readily accessible on the applicant's website;
- The application provides clear evidence of the correct use of ECTS documents for mobile students; each ECTS student file is correctly certified;
- Three complete ECTS files concerning three outgoing students and three complete ECTS files concerning three incoming students are annexed to the application form.
- The application provides a clear description of the procedure for recognition of credits gained by outgoing students during their mobility period, together with the transcript of records, proof of recognition or any other document used to show that credits have been fully recognised.

To be eligible for the award of an ECTS label, an institution must be able to demonstrate that all departments within the institution use the ECTS mechanisms. Even in the case of departments where there are no mobile students, the Information Package/Course Catalogue must provide the information requested.

The ECTS label assessment is based on written evidence that an institution is applying ECTS mechanisms correctly in all first and second cycle degree programmes (and/or for all the one-tier programmes, if these are still on offer). Institutions must make their entire Information package/Course catalogue accessible online in English. Institutions must also demonstrate that all ECTS documents for mobile students have been correctly issued in line with ECTS principles<sup>2</sup>. Learning Agreements, including any changes thereto, must be signed and dated in due time and must be fully consistent with the Transcript of Records issued to students after their mobility period.

<sup>1</sup> Each student file and each DS copy provided should be certified on at least one page.

<sup>2</sup> ECTS principles can be found in the "ECTS Key Features", as well as Annex 2, of the ECTS User's Guide, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf)



The assessment procedure will be as follows:

- The assessors will review the Information Package/Course Catalogue of the institution as published in English on the applicant's website.
- They will evaluate degree programmes in different faculties and course units within these degree programmes.
- They will examine the ECTS files of three outgoing and three incoming students and evaluate whether the documents required for each file show correct application of ECTS principles.

Assessment sheets will be prepared by EACEA and published on their website for information.

## **6.2 Quality criteria for the Diploma Supplement Label**

The criteria for the award of the DS label are:

- Four samples of **certified copies** of original Diploma Supplements (actually issued to students) are annexed to the application.
- The Diploma Supplement is issued to all graduates in first and second cycle programmes offered by the institution (including all the one-tier programmes, if these are still on offer), and, if so desired, in third cycle programmes, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language;
- The standard DS template developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO is used. The content of each section of the Diploma Supplement must be consistent with the guidelines offered in the explanatory notes provided in annex 2 of the application form. More precisely:
  - Section 4.2 of the Diploma Supplement must offer information that is specific to the programme (e.g. in the form of key learning outcomes or otherwise).
  - If there is no information in sections 2.1, 2.4, 5.2 and/or 6.1, 'not applicable' should be indicated (these sections should not be left blank).
  - Applicants should follow the guidelines in Annex 3 of the ECTS Users Guide in relation to the ECTS grading table to present information on the use and distribution of grades in section 4.4
  - Section 4.5 should contain information in the language of the HEI issuing the DS. In order to help all readers understand the meaning of this information, it is recommended to add an explanation of this classification.
- Information on the website of the institution about the availability of the DS for all graduates plus a filled-in DS example is published.

The DS label assessment is based on written evidence that an institution is issuing the Diploma Supplement in line with the Diploma Supplement template and explanatory notes and on a written public statement that the DS is being issued automatically, in a widely spoken European language and free of charge to every student upon graduation.

The assessment procedure will be as follows:

- The assessors will examine the four certified copies of completed and signed Diploma Supplements, issued to graduates of the applicant institution.
- They will examine the public information about the DS made available on the applicant's webpage.

Assessment sheets will be prepared by EACEA and published on their website, for information.

### **6.3. Quality criteria for the renewal of an ECTS label**

For the renewal of the ECTS label, an institution must be able to demonstrate that the quality standards ensured for the award of the ECTS Label are still maintained.

The criteria for the renewal of the ECTS label are:

- An Information Package/Course Catalogue in English which covers the items in the checklist for the Information Package/Course Catalogue and is readily accessible on the applicant's website.
- Confirmation of the correct use of ECTS documents for mobile students (e.g. Transcript of Records, Learning Agreements, proof of recognition, etc).
- Confirmation of the correct recognition of credits for outgoing students and confirmation of correct certification of credits for incoming students.

The institution must be able to demonstrate, upon request, that all departments within the institution use the ECTS mechanisms. Even in the case of departments where there are no mobile students, the Information Package/Course Catalogue must provide the information requested.

The renewal of the ECTS label is based on written confirmation that the institution is still applying ECTS mechanisms correctly in all first and second cycle degree programmes (and/or for all the one-tier programmes, if these are still on offer). Institutions must make their entire Information package/Course catalogue accessible online in English. Institutions must also demonstrate, if requested, that all ECTS documents for mobile students have been correctly issued in line with ECTS principles. Learning Agreements, including any changes thereto, must be signed and dated in due time and must be fully consistent with the Transcript of Records issued to students after their mobility period.

The assessment procedure will be as follows:

- A European panel of independent experts will review all renewal forms in Brussels, in particular:
  - The experts will examine the public information made available on the institution's webpage and
  - If necessary, the experts will ask the institution to provide all the relevant supporting documents in order to demonstrate the correct implementation of ECTS related activities.
- The evaluation of the European panel of independent experts will be followed by a final decision by the European Commission and EACEA.

Assessment sheets will be prepared by EACEA and published on their website for information.

#### **6.4. Quality criteria for the renewal of a DS label**

For the renewal of the DS label, an institution must be able to demonstrate that the quality standards ensured for the award of the DS Label are still maintained. In particular, the institution should be able to prove, upon request, of:

- Issuing the Diploma Supplement to all graduates in first and second cycle programmes offered by the institution (including for all the one-tier programmes, if these are still on offer), and, if so desired, in third cycle programmes, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language;
- Using the standard DS template developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO. The content of each section of the Diploma Supplement must be consistent with the guidelines offered in the explanatory notes provided in annex 2 of the application form. More precisely:
  - Section 4.2 of the Diploma Supplement must offer information that is specific to the programme (e.g. in the form of key learning outcomes or otherwise).
  - If there is no information in sections 2.1, 2.4, 5.2 and/or 6.1, 'not applicable' should be indicated (these sections should not be left blank).
  - The guidelines in Annex 3 of the ECTS Users Guide should be followed in relation to the ECTS grading table to present information on the use and distribution of grades in section 4.4
  - Section 4.5 should contain information in the original language. In order to help all readers understand the meaning of this information, it is recommended to add an explanation of this classification.
- Publishing complete and correct information on the website of the institution about the availability of the DS for all graduates, plus a filled-in DS example.

The renewal of the DS label is based on written confirmation that the institution is still issuing the Diploma Supplement in line with the Diploma Supplement template and explanatory notes, automatically, in a widely spoken European language and free of charge to every student upon graduation.

The assessment procedure will be as follows:

- A European panel of independent experts will review all renewal forms in Brussels, in particular:
  - The experts will examine the public information about the DS made available on the institution's webpage and will check the filled-in DS sample on the institution's website<sup>3</sup>
  - If necessary, the experts will ask the institution to provide all the relevant supporting documents in order to demonstrate a correct implementation of DS related activities.
- The evaluation of the European panel of independent experts will be followed by a final decision by the European Commission and EACEA.

Assessment sheets will be prepared by EACEA and published on their website for information.

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<sup>3</sup> When applying for renewal of their DS label, HEIs are not required to submit any DS sample. However, if the experts, in checking the renewal form and the HEIs website, consider that the information provided and published on the website is not complete, the Agency will ask the HEIs to submit additional information, including DS samples recently issued.