

# 3

## Academic aspects



### 3.1. The ECTS System

ECTS is the European Union's Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, which was introduced to set up common procedures that guarantee academic recognition of studies undertaken abroad. To this end, it provides a study assessment and comparison system, as well as a transfer system from one institution to another.

ECTS credits are a value allocated to course units to describe the student workload required to complete them. They reflect the quantity of work each course requires in relation to the total quantity of work required to complete a full year of academic study at the institution; that is, lectures, practical work, seminars, private work –in the library or at home– and examinations or other assessment activities. These credits express a relative value. In ECTS, 60 credits represent the workload of a year of study; normally 30 credits are given for a semester and 20 credits for a term. Credits are awarded only when the course has been completed and all required examinations have been successfully taken.

The ECTS grading scale is set as follows:

- A – EXCELLENT
- B – VERY GOOD
- C – GOOD
- D – SATISFACTORY
- E – SUFFICIENT
- FX – FAIL
- F – FAIL

### 3.2. UC credits and ECTS credits

Owing to the internal structure of some of the University of Cantabria's study plans, in some courses the number of ECTS credits (which are the ones included on their transcript of records) does not coincide with the number of University of Cantabria credits. Therefore students should rely exclusively on the information given in the ECTS guide (see section 2.2.3).

### 3.3. Academic Year Calendar

Classes are held, save exceptions, from the beginning of October to the last week in May. During the academic year classes are suspended on two occasions for approximately a fortnight: at Christmas and Easter. Similarly, there are no classes on national holidays, 28<sup>th</sup> January (St. Thomas Aquinas), local holidays and each Faculty or School's patron saint's day.

#### **Start of Academic Year:**

Last week of September

#### **End of classes:**

Beginning of June

#### • **First semester:**

Classes: beginning of October – end of January

Exams: end of January – mid February

#### • **Second semester:**

Classes: mid February – end of May or beginning of June

Exams: second half of June

#### **Extraordinary examination session:**

First half of September

### 3.4. Registration

Upon arrival at the ORI at the beginning of each semester, the students must register in the subjects included in their Learning Agreement within registration periods.

Students may attend classes prior to registration to make sure that the chosen subjects are suitable for their Study Plan. Once registered, they must pick up the corresponding registration slip to verify the courses codes.

Exchange students may request that their registration be modified and add or drop subjects, as long as deadlines are met.

### 3.5. Transcript of Records

At the end of the stay, the University of Cantabria issues a transcript of records in duplicate, which shows the grades obtained on each course students have registered for.

Under no circumstances can the transcript be sent before August (March in the case of students staying at the UC only during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester) because of the UC's grading system. Home universities should be informed about these dates.

### 3.6. Spanish Courses

The CIUC (UC Language Centre), together with the Vice-rectorate for International Relations, offers foreign students who have come to the University of Cantabria within the framework of European programmes and bilateral agreements the chance to attend Spanish courses during each of the two semesters. At the beginning of each semester students are given information on timetables and prices for 40 and 60-hour courses.

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## 3.7. The Spanish University System and Teaching Methods

Spanish universities award both official degrees and specific university degrees.

This organisation of degrees is currently undergoing revision due to the Bologna process and the setting-up of the European Higher Education Area.

1. Official qualifications, which are recognised throughout Spain, can be divided into the following:
  - **Diplomado, Ingeniero técnico or Arquitecto Técnico:** these are first cycle studies, which usually last three years.
  - **Licenciado, Ingeniero or Arquitecto Superior:** these are second cycle studies (after successful completion of the first cycle) and usually last four or five years.
  - **Doctorado (Doctorate):** this is the highest degree officially recognised in the Spanish university system, and constitutes the third cycle, as opposed to the first and second cycles (corresponding to Licenciado, Ingeniero or Arquitecto Superior). To gain access to doctoral studies the student must hold the qualification of Licenciado, Arquitecto or Ingeniero Superior. Doctorate students must complete a number of courses for two academic years, worth at least 32 credits (320 hours), and present and

gain approval of a doctoral thesis, which consists of an original piece of research on a subject related to the scientific, technical or arts field pertinent to the doctoral programme the student is following.

2. As far as the specific university degrees are concerned, universities are able, by law, to offer programmes leading to the obtaining of postgraduate studies and professional specialisation. These diplomas and qualifications do not have the value that is legally attached to official ones; however, they are of great importance with a view to completing one's academic curriculum and acquiring or completing a particular professional specialisation.

**Teaching Methods** effectively applied vary in accordance with the nature of the subject and the lecturer's preferences. Lectures accompanied by practical classes or, where appropriate, work in laboratories and workshops, is the most usual procedure. Participation in seminars, the production of written work or team project work may also be required. Lecturers have to set aside six hours' tutorial time a week from their usual class timetable in order to advise students and supervise their academic performance.

## 3.8. Assessment Methods

The most commonly used system at the University of Cantabria to assess students' academic performance is the written examination. However, once again, depending on the nature of the subject and the teaching methods applied by each individual lecturer, the written exam may be combined with or replaced by other assessment procedures, such as an oral exam, the presentation of written work, etc. Students' active participation in class is generally valued positively in the final grade.

The national grading scale goes from 0 to 10. All subjects passed must be given a numerical grade to a decimal point, from 5.0 to 10.0 according to the following scale:

- a) "Aprobado": from 5.0 to 6.9
- b) "Notable": from 7.0 to 8.9
- c) "Sobresaliente": from 9.0 to 10.0

A failed subject is included as "Suspenso" on the report but is not given a numerical mark. Lecturers may award a distinction ("Matrícula de Honor") to students who have obtained a mark equal to or higher than 9.0. The number of distinctions may not exceed five per cent of the students enrolled on a subject in the same academic year.

Equivalence between the ECTS scale and the UC's grading scale, in accordance with exchange student guidelines, is as follows:

Sobresaliente (9-10) .....	A
Notable (7,0-8,9) .....	B
Aprobado (5-6,9) .....	C
Suspenso .....	FX

Grades D, F and E do not have equivalence with the UC's grading scale.

