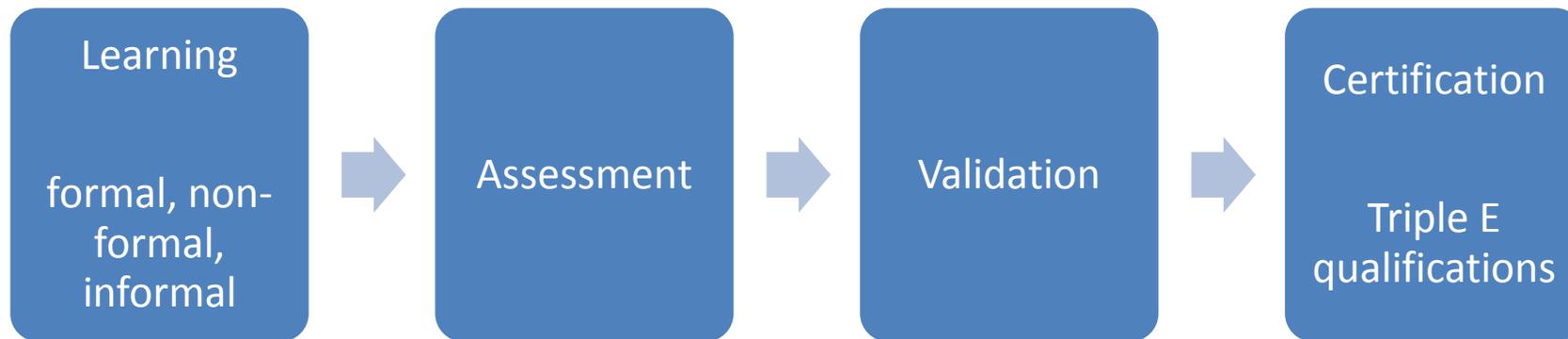




**GUIDELINES FOR THE TRIPLE E STANDARD**

**GLOSSARY of TERMS**

*FROM LEARNING TO TRIPLE E QUALIFICATIONS*



## **Average learner**

For the purpose of Triple E questionnaire a definition of an average learner is proposed by WP3 partners. An average learner should be understood as a model learner. This means that this is a typical candidate for a given qualification, i.e. having appropriate background and experience specified for a candidate of the given qualification, which facilitate the acquisition of new LOs contained in the qualification and makes the new qualification a recommended development in the professional career of the candidate. (proposed by WP3 partners).

## **Assessment of learning outcomes**

The process of appraising knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria (learning expectations, measurement of learning outcomes). Assessment is typically followed by validation and certification.

## **Assessment methods for validation**

According to the 2007 inventory of Cedefop, it is possible to classify assessment tools in the following way:

- *debate*: offers the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate depth of knowledge as well as communicative skills; Candidates can, by taking part in debate, confirm their capacity to sustain a considered argument and demonstrate depth of adequate knowledge of a subject. The debate also offers a context where they can demonstrate communication and social skills.
- *declarative methods*: based on individuals' own identification and recording of their competences, normally signed by a third party, to verify the self-assessment; Here candidates make an evidence-based statement about their learning by responding in writing to preset criteria designed to help them be evaluative. The ability to use critical reflection is important and therefore this method is used in conjunction with other methods that have more independent evaluation built in.
- *interviews* can be used to clarify issues raised in documentary evidence presented and/or to review scope and depth of learning; Interviews may be particularly useful in areas where judgement and values are important. Interviews usually accompany other tools for a more complete assessment of a candidate and to allow for commentary and clarification.
- *observation*: extracting evidence of competence from an individual while they are performing everyday tasks at work; A third party assesses the candidate's behaviour in a particular setting: there is an opportunity to observe real practice. Assessment criteria are set in advance. This method does not proscribe collaboration with colleagues or fellow learners. Depending on the context, it may be complicated to set up and can be time consuming and costly.
- *portfolio method*: using a mix of methods and instruments employed in consecutive stages to produce a coherent set of documents or works. A portfolio is an organised collection of materials that presents and verifies skills and knowledge acquired through experience. It is of particular relevance to validating non-formal and informal learning because it allows the individual candidate to contribute actively to the collection of evidence and also offers a mix of approaches strengthening the overall validity of the process. This is confirmed by the fact that many countries have introduced the portfolio as a central element in their validation approaches. A portfolio might include documents such as résumés, performance appraisals, references from current and past employers, supervisors and colleagues, and photographs of completed work certified by a referee. If self-employed in the past, a candidate might include evidence of running a business using the skills and knowledge being claimed.

It is now possible to extend the classification to encompass some assessment methods that are common but are not easy to classify using the five categories above:

- *presentation*: can be formal or informal and can be used to check ability to present information in a way appropriate to subject and audience; Here a candidate makes a formal presentation to a panel of experts. This form emphasises communicative and analytical skills as well as ability to structure complex information clearly.
- *simulation and evidence* extracted from work: where individuals are placed in a situation that fulfils all the criteria of the real-life scenario to have their competences assessed; Here a candidate performs in a structured situation modelled on real life. The method allows for testing complex interacting skills sets. It requires clear assessment criteria and may be costly. There are variations to this popular method, one here a candidate verbally and physically demonstrates their skills. Another variation involves observed role play where actors or peers take on roles to simulate a problem that requires the attention of the candidate.
- *tests and examinations*: identifying and validating informal and non-formal learning through or with the help of examinations in the formal system. In the formal process of validating learning, tests can dominate because of their qualities of wide applicability across populations, low costs and high levels of perceived fairness. In general a test is set so that candidates respond orally or in writing to pre-set questions (and answers). A test provides direct assessment of specific knowledge and skills. It may advantage candidates with strong written and oral skills and can cause candidate anxiety. Oral tests may be used to check deep understanding of complex issues and ability to explain them in simple terms. Many tests employ a multiple choice and true or false format and many well-known tests are pretested across populations so that norm referencing of responses is useful. They are considered more objective than many other methods. This type of test is well suited to being completed, marked and graded by computer. Essays can be used as test items to check the quality and standard of academic writing and use of references, ability to develop a coherent argument, and to confirm extent, understanding and transferability of knowledge and critical evaluation of ideas. Generally, essay tests are easier to prepare but testing is limited to a narrow sampling of content. Tests become 'examinations' when the test is applied widely and the quality assurance processes that govern the administration of the test questions and the judging of responses are controlled.

(Based on European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop, 2009)

### **Awarding body**

A body issuing qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) formally recognising the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following a assessment and validation procedure.

### **Certificate/diploma /title**

An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following an assessment and validation against a predefined standard.

### **Certification of learning outcomes**

The process of issuing a certificate, diploma or title formally attesting that a set of learning outcomes (knowledge, knowhow, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual have been assessed and validated by a competent body against a predefined standard.

### **Competence**

The ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development).

**Comment:** competence is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g. social or organisational skills) and ethical values.

## **Credit**

An assessed Learning Outcome, which can be recognised, accumulated and transferred. Credit for learning outcomes (i.e. credit) designates individuals' learning outcomes which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications. Credit refers to the fact that the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes which have been assessed positively and the outcome of the assessment was documented in a personal transcript. Based on this documentation, other institutions can recognise learners' credit.

**Comment:** Credit is a different concept than ECVET points. ECVET points are not the subject of credit transfer. Similarly, the process of accumulation concerns the assessed and validated learning outcomes and not the ECVET points.

ECVET points are not to be confused with credit. While credit designates the learning outcomes the learner has achieved, ECVET points provide information about the qualification and the units. In other words, while credit is related to a person and his/her personal achievement (credit does not exist on its own without someone having achieved it), ECVET points are linked to the qualification structure and description (independent of whether someone has achieved the qualification or not). Credit can be transferred and accumulated if the competent institution recognises that the credit the learner has achieved is relevant and can be taken into account as part of the qualification the learner is preparing (or seeks recognition for). ECVET points provide information about the credit the learner has transferred and accumulated (e.g. what is the relative weight of units the learner has already achieved) (ECVET User Guide, EU Commission, 2011)

## **Credit system**

An instrument designed to enable accumulation of learning outcomes gained in formal, non-formal and/or informal settings, and facilitate their transfer from one setting to another for validation and recognition. A credit system can be designed: – by describing an education or training programme and attaching points (credits) to its components (modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.); or – by describing a qualification using learning outcomes units and attaching credit points to every unit.

## **Credit transfer**

Credit transfer is the process through which learning outcomes achieved in one context can be taken into account in another context. Credit transfer is based on the processes of assessment, validation and recognition. (ECVET User Guide, EU Commission, 2011)

## **Credit accumulation**

Credit accumulation is a process through which learners can acquire qualifications progressively by successive assessments and validation of learning outcomes. In ECVET accumulation is enabled by the use of units of learning outcomes that can be progressively assessed, validated and recognised. It is based on qualification systems' rules and requirements on accumulation. These rules define which learning outcomes are accumulated towards which qualification and how they are assessed and validated. (ECVET User Guide, EU Commission, 2011)

## **European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS)**

A systematic way of describing a higher education programme by attaching credits to its components (modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.), to: – make study programmes easy to read and compare for all students, local and foreign; – encourage mobility of students and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning; – help universities to organise and revise their study programmes.

**Comment:** ECTS is based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, specified in terms of learning outcomes to be acquired. The student workload of a fulltime study programme in Europe amounts in most cases to around 1500-1800 hours per year and in those cases one credit stands for around 25 to 30 working hours. Individuals who can demonstrate similar learning outcomes acquired in other learning settings may obtain recognition and credits (waivers) from the degree awarding bodies.

## **European qualification framework for lifelong learning (EQF)**

A reference tool for the description and comparison of qualification levels in qualifications systems developed at national, international or sectoral level.

**Comment:** the EQF's main components are a set of 8 reference levels described in terms of learning outcomes (a combination of knowledge, skills and/or competences) and mechanisms and principles for voluntary cooperation. The eight levels cover the entire span of qualifications from those recognising basic knowledge, skills and competences to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional and vocational education and training. EQF is a translation device for qualification systems.

## **Formal learning**

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's p

## **Informal learning**

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.

### **Comments:**

- informal learning outcomes do not usually lead to certification but may be validated and certified in the framework of recognition of prior learning schemes;
- informal learning is also referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning.

## **Non-formal learning**

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.

### **Comments:**

- non-formal learning outcomes may be validated and lead to certification;
- non-formal learning is sometimes described as semi-structured learning.

## **Qualification**

The formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work. A qualification confers official recognition of the value of learning outcomes in the labour market and in education and training. A qualification can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade.

*In Triple E both formal (public) and non-format (market driven) qualifications are accepted. Publicly recognised bodies and sector recognised bodies can be rendered as competent bodies for Triple E accreditation procedure.*

## **Qualification framework**

An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes.

### **Comment:**

A qualification framework can be used to:

- establish national standards of knowledge, skills and competences;
- promote the quality of education;
- provide a system of coordination and/or integration of qualifications and enable comparison of qualifications by relating qualifications to each other;
- promote access to learning, transfer of learning outcomes and progression in learning.

## **Qualification system**

All activities related to the recognition of learning outcomes and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. These activities include:

- definition of qualification policy, training design and implementation, institutional arrangements, funding, quality assurance;
- assessment, validation and certification of learning outcomes.

## **Recognition of learning outcomes**

Formal recognition: the process of granting official status to skills and competences either through the:

- award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles); or
- grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers, validation of gained skills and/or competences;

Recognition of LOs means the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications.

Following validation, learners receive an official confirmation of the fact that the knowledge, skills and competence acquired abroad are accepted as part of the intended qualification or as an addition to it. For this they do not have to retake an examination or catch up on periods of learning. In practice, this can mean that learners receive a certificate or that the unit(s) of learning outcomes are recorded in their personal transcript. Sometimes the recognition phase may entail that the person/organisation in charge of recognition verifies that the processes of assessment and validation have taken place according to the existing rules and that there are no irregularities (ECVET User Guide, 2012).

## **Size of a qualification**

A numerical indication of the scope and complexity of LOs contained in a qualification, which can be expressed in terms of the workload (notional hours) needed from a learner in order to achieve a qualification (explanation proposed by WP3 partners).

### **Transferability of learning outcomes**

The degree to which knowledge, skills and competences can be used in a new occupational or educational environment, and/or to be validated and certified.

### **Transparency of qualifications**

The degree of visibility and legibility of qualifications, of their content and value on the (sectoral, regional, national or international) labour market and in the education and training systems.

### **Unit (ECVET)**

A set of knowledge, skills, and/or competences which constitute a coherent part of a qualification. A unit can be the smallest part of a qualification that can be assessed, transferred, validated and, possibly, certified. A unit can be specific to a single qualification or common to several qualifications.

**Comment:** the characteristics of units (content, size, total number of units composing a qualification, etc.) are defined by the competent body responsible for the qualification at the appropriate level. The definition and description of units can vary according to the qualifications system and the procedures of the competent body. However, the ECVET system proposes to provide for every unit:

- the generic title of the unit;
- the knowledge, skills and competence which are contained in a unit;
- the criteria for assessment of the corresponding learning outcomes.

### **Validation of learning outcomes**

Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification.

Validation of learning outcomes means the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification. Validation within international mobility is preceded by assessment abroad and based on the documentation of assessed learning outcomes by the assessor abroad (personal transcript). Those in charge of the validation in the home organisation take stock of assessor's judgement. They compare this documentation with the learning outcomes laid down in the learning agreement and examine the extent to which the two documents are consistent. If the expected learning outcomes are met at the required level (of proficiency, autonomy, etc.) then the assessment is validated. This can mean that learners can have their learning outcomes recognised, which allows for transfer and accumulation. (ECVET User Guide, EU Commission, 2011)

### **Workload**

Learning effort needed from a learner in order to achieve a qualification. Can be expressed using notional hours devoted by a model learner to a variety of learning activities needed to achieve a qualification. (explanation proposed by WP3 partners).

*A selection of terms and definitions collated by WP3 partners based on:*

[Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 terms.](#) 2nd ed.  
Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop (2014)