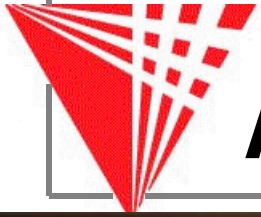


Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago, U.S.A.

Alphabet Soup of Grade Conversion: What works and what doesn't
Presenter: Dr. Vanita Misquita – Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago
Thursday, May 19, 2016
10:45 am – 12 noon



Alphabet soup of Grade Conversion







ALPHABET SOUP OF GRADE CONVERSION

- **A, B,C D**
- **Pass, Marginal Pass**
- **Borderline Pass**
- **Satisfactory**
- **Sufficient**
- **Conceded Pass**
- **1st Division**
- **Honors**
- **Matriculation with honors**



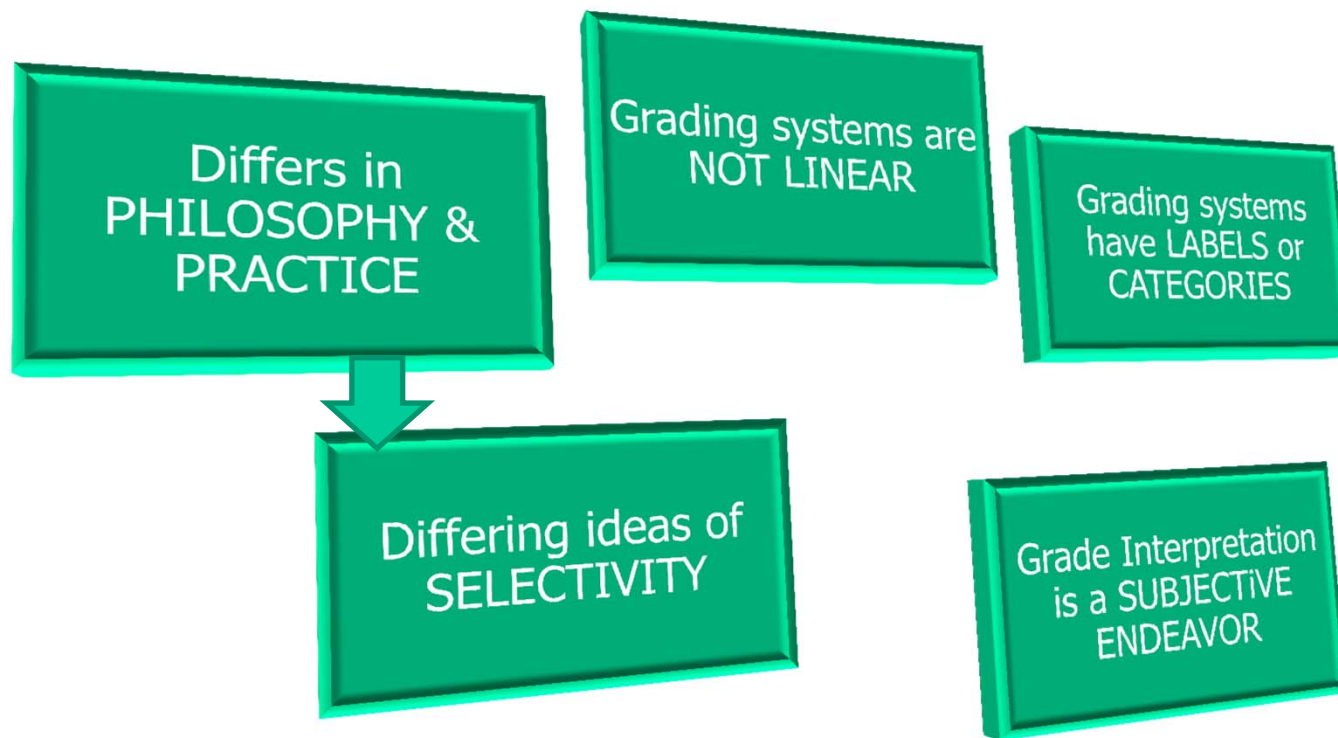
OUTLINE



- 1a. GRADING SYSTEMS - BRIEF INTRO/CULTURAL FACTORS/POLICIES**
- 1b. GRADING SYSTEMS - COMPARISONS & DIFFERENCES – U.S., EUROPE, ASIA, LATIN AMERICA & AUSTRALIA**
- 3. PASSING GRADE VS. FAILING GRADE – A FINE LINE**
- 4. CONCORDANCE /EQUIVALENCY TABLES**
- 5. CONCLUSION**

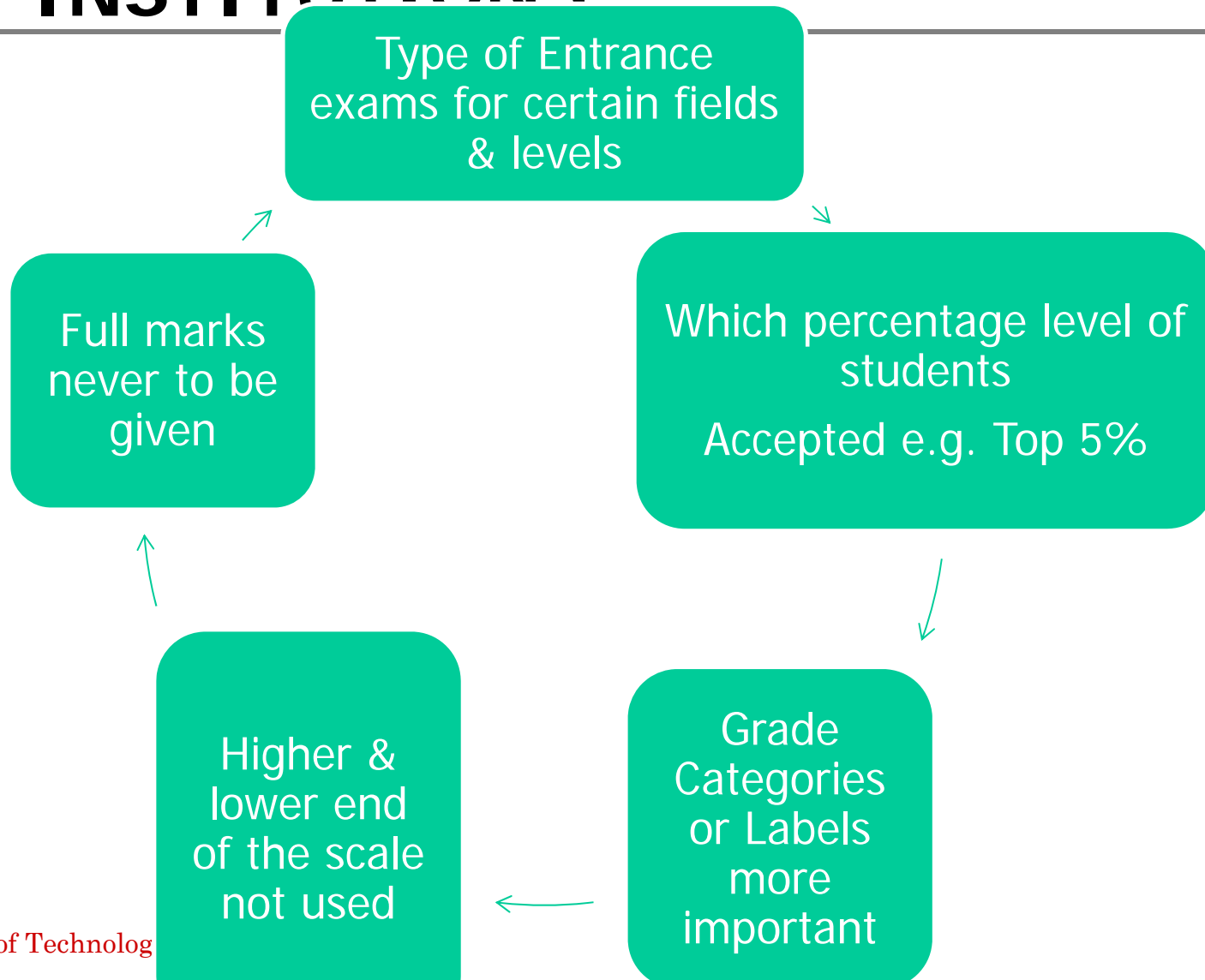


GRADING SYSTEMS



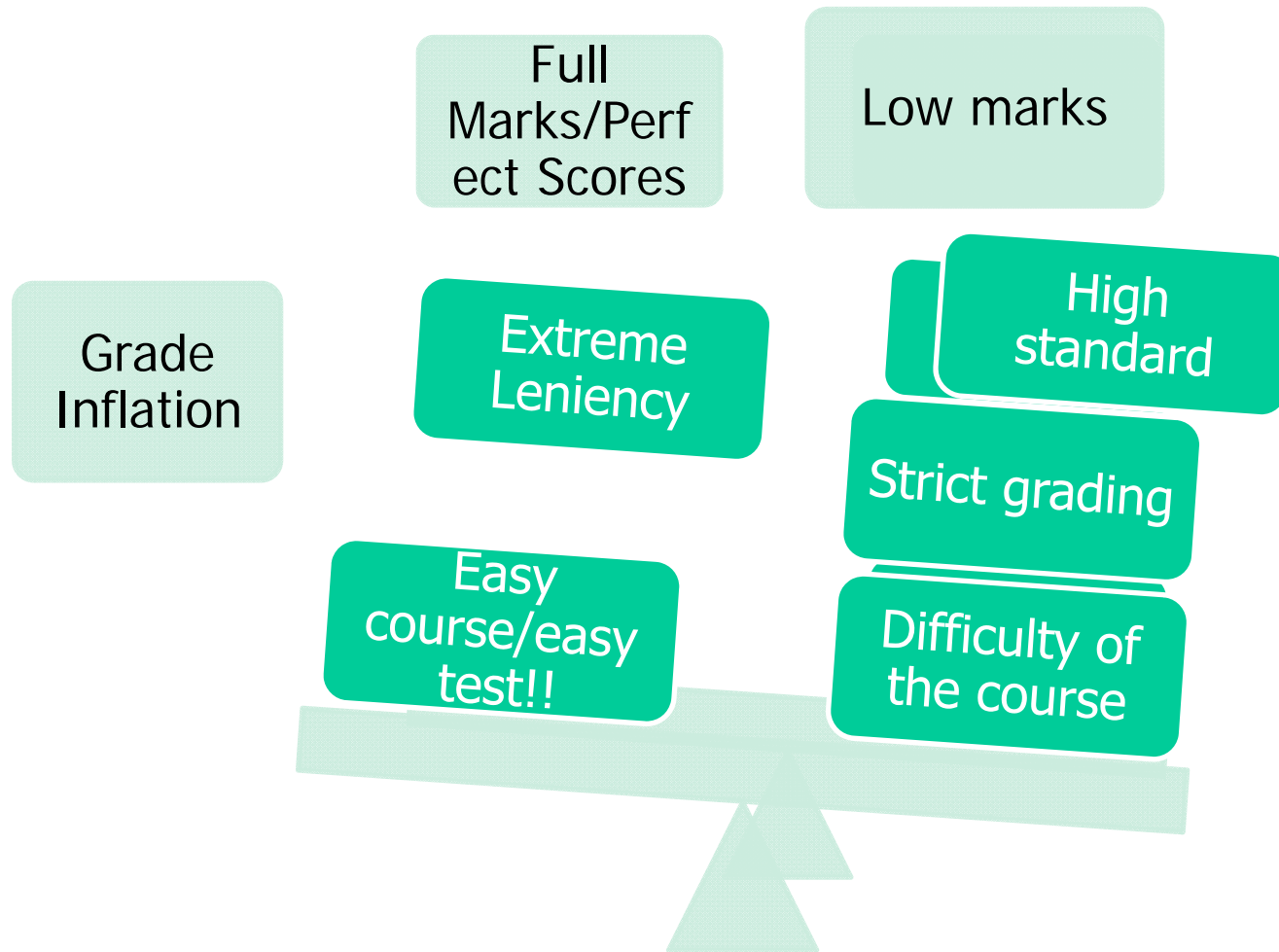


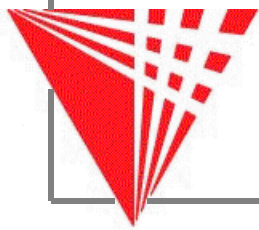
PHILOSOPHIES BEHIND GRADING SYSTEMS & REPUTATION OF INSTITUTIONS





CULTURAL BIASES ABOUT GRADING





GRADING SYSTEMS – Where they diverge

I. Some countries and institutions, hardly use the higher end of the scale

France – 17+ out of 20 is at best, non-existent

Netherlands – “ A 10 should be awarded only in cases of absolute perfection” (Nuffic)

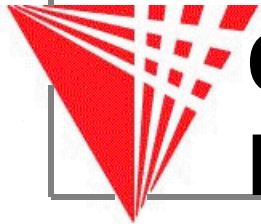
II. Some countries, Grade Categories are more important

U.K. – what matters is whether a grade is a 1st Class Honors or not, & not whether the student got a 71 or a 72 except when it crosses Grade categories .
Similar situation in India

III. Some countries do use the higher end of the scale to encourage and reward rather than to seek absolute perfection

Italy – it is possible to get a 27 out of 30

U.S. - it is possible to get a 4.0/4.0



GRADING SYSTEMS – WHERE THEY DIVERGE

IV. Some countries rarely use the lower end and the higher end of the scale

e.g. Netherlands – Grades 1 – 4 and 9 and 10 are rarely given with exceptions

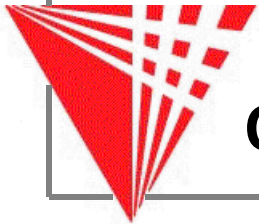
V. Labels/descriptions/Categories assigned are influenced by culture and tradition

e.g. U.K. – 3rd Class (Pass – assigned to a small number of borderline students)

France – Passable – a large majority of passing grades

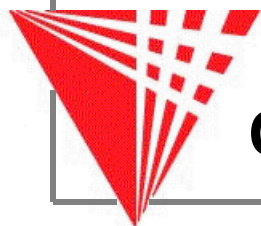
Both labels mean different things

VI. Some institution do NOT use grades at all – just remarks like a report card



GRADING SYSTEM IN THE U.S.

- Grade Point Average (GPA) – 4.0 or 5.0 scale
- Most prevalent in the U.S. is the 4.0 scale
 - A = 4.0 (Excellent)
 - B = 3.0 (Good)
 - C = 2.0 (Satisfactory)
 - D/F = Fail
- C grade is the minimum Passing grade for course transfer for many institutions, but some also may accept a D
- However, more than one C at the Graduate level in a program, may result in the student Failing OUT of the program in some institutions.



GRADE POINT AVERAGE IN THE U.S.

GPA calculated based on the addition of the number of credits per course and grade awarded for each course, and taking the average

e.g. Course 1 = 3 ch – B grade (3 ch x 3 pts) = 9

Course 2 = 3 ch – C grade (3 ch x 2 pts) = 6

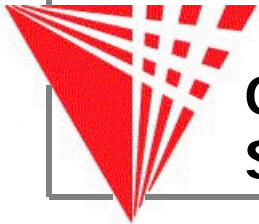
Total = 6 ch = 15

GPA = $15/6 = 2.5$ out of 4.0

ECTS – European Credit Transfer & Accumulation System



- Adopted by countries belonging to the EHEA (European Higher Education Area)
- Facilitate transfer of academic results (grades) between different national assessment systems
- A= grade obtained by the best 10% of students
- B= next 25%
- C= next 30%
- D = next 25%
- E = final 10%



GRADING SYSTEMS – WHERE THEY CONVERGE SOMEWHAT

Netherlands, Spain, Brazil

Grading Scale: Out of 10

1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest grade

Pass mark: 6 for Netherlands: 5 for Spain & Brazil

Hong Kong like the U.S. uses a GPA

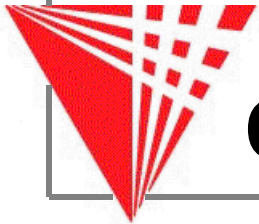
Where they differ:

Netherlands – Grades 1 to 4 and Grades 9 and 10 are rarely given in general

Most common grades are 6 – 7

Spain – average grades in general, vary between 5.5 to 6.5

Hong Kong may use a = 4.3 = A instead of a 4.0 & some use a 12-point system



GRADING SYSTEMS

ASIA -SINGAPORE

Grade I – 70%+ - 1st Class Honours

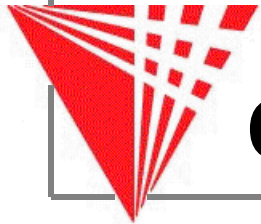
Grade II – 65% – 69% – 2nd Cl H; 1st Div

Grade II – 60% – 64% - 2Nd Cl H: 2nd Div

Grade III – 50% - 59% - 3rd Cl. H

Fail - Below 50%

-Grading may vary per discipline



GRADING SYSTEMS

HONG KONG

- Use GPA

A+ = 4.3 or A = 4.0 or A = Excellent

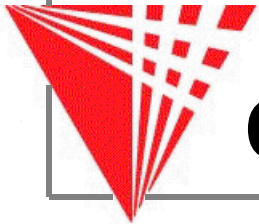
B+ = 3.30 or B = 3.0 or B = Good

C+ = 2.30 or C = 2.0 or C = Adequate

D+ = 1.30 or D = 1.0 or D = Marginal Pass

F = Fail

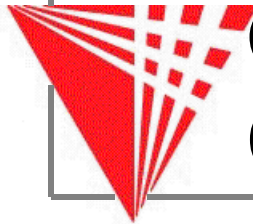
- Some institutions may use an A+ = 4.5...



GRADING SYSTEMS

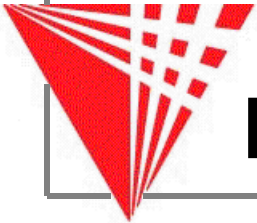
GERMANY

- With the exception of Law school, university grading is as such:
 - 1.0 – 1.5 - Sehr Gut (V. Good) Outstanding
 - 1.6 – 2.5 – Gut (Good) Meets standards & above average
 - 2.6 – 3.5 - Befriedegend -Satisfactory – average requirements
 - 3.6 – 4.0 - Ausreichend -Sufficient – lowest passing grade
 - 4.1 – 5.0 - Nicht Ausreichend –Fail – does not meet the minimum requirements



COMMON MISTAKES IN GRADE TRANSFERENCE

- Do NOT equate one grade in one scale with the corresponding grade in another scale
e.g. ECTS C = is not equivalent to an U.S. C
Dutch 7 = is not equivalent to a U.S. C
- A Pass in one institution does not equate to a D in another institution
- Do NOT assume that an institution in certain countries/regions is less reputable because of a lack of recognized ranking (EGO INFLATION)
- DO NOT ignore the possibility of grade inflation which exists in the U.S. and some other countries



PASSING GRADE – GOOD OR BAD

Conceded Pass (CP) or Extra Credit

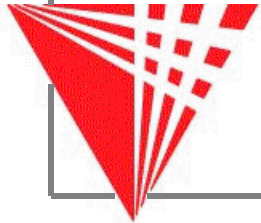
- Pass for a course that has been awarded after supplementary assessment (E.g. Australia & U.S. respectively)

Passing Grade of 5 out of 10 & courseload

- Minimum passing grade in as many subjects in the 1st attempt, considered to be good (e.g. Spain)

PASS/FAIL

- Certain institutions in the U.S. transfer the grades of a student studying abroad as a Pass or Fail. This is oftentimes encouraging for the student as it does not affect the GPA and can be an advantage in encouraging more students to study abroad



SATISFACTORY, SUFFICIENT MARGINAL PASS & PASSING – Where to draw the line?



Italian HE out of 30 in general :

0 – 17 = Fail

18 – 20 = D- or Sufficient (40%)

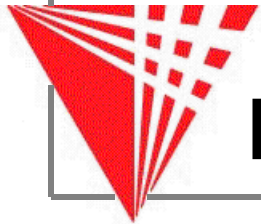
21 – 24 = D+ or D or Satisfactory (30%)

25 – 27 = C or Good (20%)

28 – 29 = B -/B/B+ V. Good (5%)

U.S. correspondence:

18 – 24 – considered Barely Passing



FACTORS IN GRADING

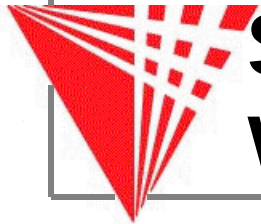
SOME PARALLELS:

Course Unit Values & Coefficients

- Different weights for a course – e.g. full year vs semester course (e.g. Australia)

Coefficients:

- Different weights for a course depending on its importance in the curriculum (e.g. France)



SATISFACTORY VS PASSING – Where to draw the line

**Percentage of students receiving a Satisfactory grade vs
Passing Grade**

SPAIN (Scale 0 – 10)

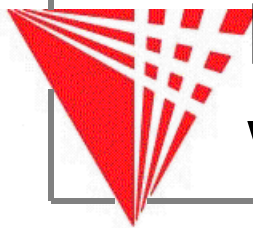
5 min Passing and 5 – 6.9 = Satisfactory/good

U.S. - C equivalent – e.g. 70% of a class with a 6.5 out of 10 (2014 –
ETSIT-UPM, SPAIN)

FRANCE (Scale 0 – 20)

Grade according to the curve – similar to the U.S.

No minimum passing, varies per school – on average, 10 out of 20 is
considered a general Pass mark



FAILING GRADE – F or D which is worse?

- Dependent on institution in a country
- Perceptions differ amidst institutions in a country
- Brazil – Failing grade – means have not taken the exams in SOME institutions whereas a D Grade – took the exams and did not Pass
- U.S. – D/E or F means Fail -implies retaking the course
- Europe – ECTS system – E – final 10% - retake the course

THE CHART BELOW was proposed for a particular consortium of institutions where common examination papers are double marked by home and host campus and hundreds of students are exchanged in all directions annually. It is NOT claimed that this system would be suited for grade conversion outside of this consortium. It neutralizes the British "Third Class" as it was set equal to minimum pass grade in other systems that do not have an equivalent notion as a British "Third."

EXAMPLE OF GRADES/CLASS EQUIVALENCES AMONG ONE CONSORTIUM

GREAT BRITAIN	FRANCE	GERMANY	SPAIN	UNITED STATES
100-90	20.0-18.0	1.0	10.0	
89	17.8	1.0	9.9	
88	TRES	1.1	9.9	
87	BIEN	1.1	9.9	
86	17.2	1.2	9.8	A+
85	17.0	1.2	9.8	
84	16.8	1.3	9.7	
83	16.6	1.3	9.7	
82	16.4	1.3	9.6	
81	16.2	1.4	9.6	
FIRST	16.0	SEHR	9.5	
80		1.4		
CLASS		GUT	SALIENTE	
79	15.8	1.5	9.4	
78	15.6	1.5	9.4	A
77	15.4	1.5	9.4	
76	15.2	1.5	9.3	
75	15.0	1.6	9.3	
74	BIEN	1.6	9.2	
73	14.8	1.7	9.2	
72	14.6	1.7	9.1	A-
71	14.4	1.7	9.1	
70	14.2	1.8	9.1	
	14.0	1.9	9.0	
69	13.8	2.0	8.8	
68	13.6	2.1	8.6	B+
67	13.4	2.2	8.4	
UPPER	ASSEZ	2.3	NOTABLE	
66	BIEN	2.4	8.2	
65	13.0		8.0	
SECOND		2.5	7.8	
64	12.8	2.6	7.6	
63	12.6	2.7	7.4	B
62	12.4	2.8	7.2	
CLASS	12.2	2.9	7.0	
61	12.0	3.0	6.8	
60		3.1	6.6	
59	11.8	3.2	6.4	B-
LOWER	11.6	3.3	6.2	
57	11.4	3.5	6.0	
56	PASSABLE			
55	11.0	3.6	5.8	
CLASS		(AUSREICHEND)	5.6	
54	10.8	3.7	5.4	
53	10.6	3.8	5.2	
52	10.4	3.9		C
51	10.2			
THIRD				
CLASS	10.0	4.0	5.0	
40-50				



EQUIVALENCE TABLE – An example – ENSTA Bretagne, FR

(www.ensta-Bretagne.en/index.php/grading-of-students-equivalence-of-grades/)

ENSTA

ECTS

U.S.

20 - 15

A

A+

15 – 13

B

A, A-

13 – 11

C

B+, B

11 – 10

D

B-, C+, C

10 – 9

E

C-, D+, D

<9

Fx

D-, F



GRADE CONVERSION – WES

<https://www.wes.org/gradeconversionguide/index.asp>

SPAIN

Revised Equivalency Grade Distribution

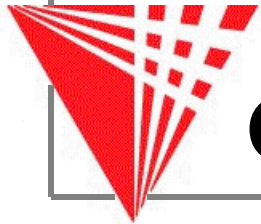
MH = A

Sobrasaliente (Outstanding) = A-

Notable (Notable) = B+

Aprobado (Pass) = B-

Suspenso (Failure) = F



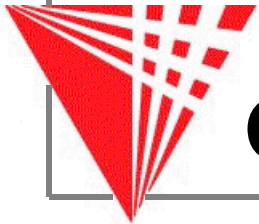
CONCLUSION

- **Recognition of credit**

“Process through which an institution certifies that learning outcomes achieved & assessed in another institution satisfy the requirement of one of the programs they offer”

“Number of credits gained from compatible learning outcomes at one institutions will replace the number of credits allocated for compatible learning outcomes at the awarding institution”

(Ref.ECTS Users' Guide 2015, p.31)



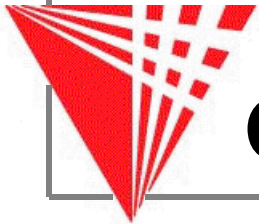
CONCLUSION

- **WORKLOAD**

“an estimation of the time an individual needs to complete learning activities....” e.g. lectures, seminars, work placements.. (p.11 ECTS Users’ Guide 2015)

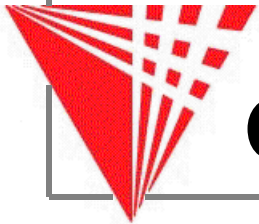
- **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

“are statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.” (p.11 ECTS Users Guide 2015)



CONCLUSION

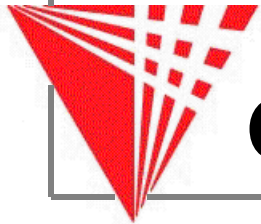
- Compatibility of outcomes, NOT equivalence of context
- Correspondence of a full-time workload of 60 ECTS credits for the year roughly corresponds to a range of 1500- 1800 hours for an academic year. So a typical workload of 1 ECTS credit may correspond to 25 – 30 hours of work (*p. 11, ECTS Users' Guide 2015*)
- **Award of credit hours** – roughly 2 ECTS credits may be equivalent to 1 U.S. credit hour depending on the course requirements



CONCLUSION

BEST PRACTICES

- Institutions should provide a **clear explanation** of their grading scale and **the percentage of students** achieving various grades in the class
- Recommended to use a **grade distribution table** – max & mini grades, grade distribution & class boundaries
- To understand the grading systems around the world, know the **history of countries** – e.g. by and large colonized countries usually adopt the systems of the colonial power and then adapt their systems somewhat over time, however, some similarities remain in general in grading philosophy
- Pay serious attention to **Grading Classes or categories** within the country's context
- **Average grades** should be well understood within that institution's system and computed within the institution's system before converting it to another institution's system



CONCLUSION

- Grade overlap with percentage ranges
 - Receiving institutions should decide in advance whether they will take the minimum, average or maximum comparable grade of overlapping ranges

“Foreign grades are not just numbers that can be calculated by applying a mathematical formula but a MESSAGE that needs first to be UNDERSTOOD in the original system, and in a second stage INTERPRETED by uses in the new system”

Ref. Capturing the Message conveyed by Grades, Guy Haug reprinted from World Education News & Reviews, Vol. 10, No;2, Spring 1997



Illinois Institute of Technology