

QUATREC 2 – Comparing qualifications for reliable recognition 2

Country chapter

The aim of the country chapters is to collect information about the use of learning outcomes in higher education. Information from country chapters will be used to develop methodology for writing and comparing learning outcomes in terms of recognition.

Please provide detailed information about each aspect regarding learning outcomes:

Country: Latvia

Chapter 1. General information about the use of learning outcomes

1.1 Legal framework for learning outcomes in higher education (if applicable)

In higher education of Latvia, learning outcomes are called “study results” (*studiju rezultāti*). In the Law on Higher Education institutions, learning outcomes (study results) are defined as the set of knowledge, skills and competence to be acquired at the end of the study programme, study module or study course. Law on Higher Education Institutions¹ defines learning outcomes and stipulates their use in study programmes. According to the law, description of the study course must:

- define aim and learning outcomes;
- outline the content of the study course required to achieve the learning outcomes;
- determine the evaluation criteria of learning outcomes.

According to the law, higher education institutions must evaluate knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside of non-formal and informal learning, recognise them and also award credit points if they correspond to the learning outcomes of respective study programme.

While the law stipulates that learning outcomes must be formulated for study programmes, modules and courses it does not specify how learning outcomes should be formulated.

1.2 Categories/ dimensions in which learning outcomes are expressed (e.g. knowledge, skills, competences) and how are they defined?

At national level

- Knowledge – a set of cognitive items acquired during learning, work and life experience;
- Skills – ability to perform an activity according to the desired quality and scope;
- Competences – a flexible and dynamic set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and emotions for performing a specific activity.

¹ Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums>

At higher education institution level

Almost all HEIs indicated that they express learning outcomes in knowledge, skills and competences (according to Education Law). However, one HEI indicated that they express learning outcomes in knowledge, comprehension, attribution, communication and general skills.

1.3 Are learning outcomes subject to Quality Assurance? Who assesses and how?

Learning outcomes are subject to quality assurance. HEIs need to perform internal quality assurance by preparing self-assessment reports for study fields which includes all study programmes of that field. In self-assessment reports they have to indicate learning outcomes. In self-assessment reports HEIs must indicate assessment criteria, conditions and procedures for assessing learning outcomes.²

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 793: “Regulations regarding opening and accreditation of study fields”³, the quality assurance agency must ensure that study base, scientific base (if applicable), informative base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial base complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

According to HEI surveys learning outcomes are often used to improve study programmes and achieve goals. The programme director evaluates how the learning outcomes of individual study courses contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme. For example, there have been cases where certain Part-B courses have been excluded because it has been concluded that their learning outcomes do not contribute to the learning outcomes of the programme. Learning outcomes are also used to improve assessment methods. Learning outcomes are taken into consideration when creating course descriptions. Continuous monitoring is carried out to see if they are included in the course descriptions or whether the teaching staff respects them. Learning outcomes are analysed and used for further development of study programmes. Learning outcomes are used when developing and improving programmes (mapping of study programmes). When evaluating the learning outcomes achieved by students, the content of the study course or the methods used are/can be changed. If the study course is based on formative assessment, then the student can track their progress.

Many HEIs also involve students in improving their learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are often discussed with students, they receive feedback, and they are involved in the assessment of learning outcomes.

² Guidelines for the development of a study direction self-assessment report (2019), https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Studiju-virziena-pasnovertejuma-zinojuma-izstrades-vadlinijas_2019.pdf

³ Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 793: “Regulations regarding opening and accreditation of study fields” (2019), <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/303956-studiju-virzienu-atversanas-un-akreditacijas-noteikumi>

Quality is provided on the basis of an assessment of learning outcomes. For example, a representative of one HEI mentioned that each year, the results achieved are discussed with both students and faculty colleagues and management to make the necessary improvements. In case of improvements, they suggest to improve the formulations for the study programme directors. Learning outcomes are also improved by following the latest international trends.

HEI survey indicated that learning outcomes were assessed using: seminars, discussions, essays, tests, group work, case studies, creative work, project development and thesis. Representative of one HEI gave an example that multiple-choice tests can only assess knowledge rather than identify competences, while more creative work can already assess competences. Several respondents indicated that both formative and summative assessments are used to assess learning outcomes.

1.4 Are learning outcomes of the study programme indicated in Diploma Supplement (if there is one)?

Yes, according to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued”⁴ learning outcomes of the study programmes must be indicated in Diploma Supplement in subsection 4.2. “programme requirements (programme aims and intended results of studies)” under section 4 “Information on the contents and results gained”.

In practice, not always HEIs indicate learning outcomes in Diploma Supplement. Sometimes only the aim of the programme is indicated. In some cases, aim of the programme are considered as learning outcomes.

Chapter 2. Good practice for writing learning outcomes in terms of recognition

1.5 Recommendations, guidelines, set procedures for writing learning outcomes (if applicable)

Please provide references and/or links, if possible.

- **At national level**

Informative brochure “Quality of implementation of ECVET mobility” (https://viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/ECVET_e_brosura_ECVET_mobilitates_istenosanas_kvalitat_ei.pdf). The material provides suggestions for formulating learning outcomes. Even though it focuses on vocational education (EQF level 2-4), the suggestions can also be applied to higher education. Learning outcomes handbook (<https://www.lu.lv/studijurezultati/>). Currently under development.

- **At international level**

⁴ Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 202: “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (2013), <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157-kartiba-kada-izsniedz-valsts-atzitus-augstako-izglitiba-apliecinosus-dokumentus>

ETCS Users Guide 2015. Page 23: Formulating programme learning outcomes (https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

Writing and Using Learning Outcomes. A practical guide (2006) (<https://www.cmepius.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-Learning-Outcomes-Book-D-Kennedy.pdf>, https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Studiju-rezult%C4%81tu-formul%C4%93%C5%A1ana-un-izmanto%C5%A1ana_praktisk%C4%81-rokasgr%C4%81mata.pdf)

- At higher education institution level

Almost all HEIs surveyed have procedures for writing learning outcomes.

The time it takes to update procedures for writing them varies. In some HEIs the procedures are renewed several times a year, while others renew them every two years. In some HEIs the procedures are reviewed much less frequently – every six years.

Guidelines, recommendations and other sources listed by HEI which are used to formulate learning outcomes:

- https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Studiju-rezult%C4%81tu-formul%C4%93%C5%A1ana-un-izmanto%C5%A1ana_praktisk%C4%81-rokasgr%C4%81mata.pdf
- Handbook for formulating, mapping and evaluating learning outcomes (*Studiju rezultātu formulēšanas, kartēšanas un novērtēšanas rokasgrāmata*) (University of Latvia, 2020), https://issuu.com/inta.deke/docs/studiju_rezultatu_rokasgramata_2020
- Occupational standards;
- EQF level descriptors, <https://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/EQF-level-descriptors-2017.pdf>
- LQF level descriptors, <https://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LQF-level-descriptors.pdf>
- B. Bloom taxonomy. Taxonomy of educational goals (Benjamin Bloom, SOLO (Kevin Collis & John Biggs).
- CC2020, e-CF, EQF, Latvian NCP
- Learning outcomes and their formulation (*Studiju Rezultāti un to formulēšana*) (AIC, 2009), http://www.aic.lv/ar/macibsp/1_4_2009_macibu%20studiju%20rezultatu_formulesanai.pdf
- Handbook of learning outcomes (*Studiju rezultātu rokasgrāmata*), <https://www.lu.lv/studijurezultati/>
- Ensuring the quality of studies in everyday life – learning outcomes (*Studiju kvalitātes nodrošināšana ikdienā – studiju rezultāti*) (LLU, 2016), https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2016-06/AK2016_Materialu_krajums.pdf
- Study mapping methodological material (*Studiju kartēšanas metodiskais materiāls*) (RISEBA, 2018), http://doc.riseba.lv/MN0002_01%20Studiju%20kart%C4%93%C5%A1anas%20metodiskais%20or%C4%81d%C4%abjums.pdf
- Study quality system based on study results in RTA (*Studiju rezultātos balstīta studiju kvalitātes sistēma RTA*) (RTA, 2019), https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_LV/studijas/SKVS/2/studiju_rezultatos_balstita_studiju_kvalit%C4%81tes_sistema_RTa.pdf and Learning outcomes, process passport (*Studiju rezultāti, procesa pase*) (RTA, 2019), https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_LV/studijas/SKVS/2/Studiju%20rezult%C4%81ti_2020.pdf

- Regulations for evaluation of learning outcomes (*Studiju rezultātu vērtēšanas nolikums*) (RTU, 2017), https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_1_studiju_rezultatu_vertesanas_nolikums.pdf
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015), http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/AIC%20ESG2015%20int-1_2.pdf

1.6 Formulation of learning outcomes (who defines, what methodology is used, who approves, ownership)

- At national level

While at national level Law on Higher Education Institutions stipulate that learning outcomes must be formulated for study programmes, they or any other regulations do not define how learning outcomes should be formulated.

- At higher education institution level (including – number if learning outcomes used; use of NQF/EQF level descriptors)

Most HEIs have guidelines/recommendations for formulation learning outcomes (question 1.5), but those HEIs that do not have guidelines for writing learning outcomes mostly use LQF/EQF level descriptors, occupational standards and Latvian NCP informative materials. Learning outcomes are designed to correspond to the aims of the study programme and the content of the course. In HEI survey almost all respondents (35) indicated that they use LQF/EQF level descriptors to formulate learning outcomes. Only few respondents (4) said that they do not use LQF/EQF level descriptors to formulate learning outcomes.

One respondent stated that: “They have to be concise, specific, clear to both lecturers and students. They must be formulated in proportion to the amount of credit points of the study course that the student must acquire during the study course, without asking the student for more than the study course can provide in the allotted time and amount. With independent study tasks, various methods and tests, the lecturer must be able to check, measure whether the results to be achieved have been achieved.”

The number of learning outcomes used for study programmes varies greatly not only in each HEI, but also in each study programme. Most often 4-6 learning outcomes are formulated. One HEI indicated 5-7. Several others indicated 7-12 learning outcomes. However, most emphasise that the number of learning outcomes is not fixed and may vary from study programme to study programme. One of the HEIs pointed out that the number of learning outcomes should be formulated proportionately, in one study field of similar study programmes learning outcomes should be formulated in similar number, evaluating their attainability in the study process.

As regard to training for writing learning outcomes, the majority of respondents (26) indicated that their HEIs offer training for writing learning outcomes. Several respondents indicated that their HEIs

organise professional development seminars on defining learning outcomes. A representative of one HEI indicated that continuing education courses are organised for study programme directors, academic staff, and that the Department of Studies also organises workshops for formulating and mapping learning outcomes.

1.7 Good practice example of formulating learning outcomes

Good practice example of Latvia, Riga Stradiņš University, Bachelor of Social Sciences in Management and Administration

Knowledge

1. Able to demonstrate specialised knowledge in economics and management of international business and start-up entrepreneurship.
2. Able to demonstrate a critical and current understanding of concepts and regularities in the economics and management of international business and start-up entrepreneurship.
3. Able to demonstrate in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge of theory, analysis methods and tools in the economic analysis of international business and start-up entrepreneurship.
4. Is aware of the development of the necessary knowledge and skills, including social digital skills, and the need for self-growth in the global environment of international business and start-up entrepreneurship.

Skills

1. Able to identify trends and find creative solutions using a scientific approach to the changing problems of international business and start-up entrepreneurship.
2. Able to gather information from various sources analytically and independently, evaluate it critically and present it correctly.
3. Able to formulate information in a structured analytical and laconic concentrated manner in writing, to express oneself precisely and to discuss general and specialised aspects of international business and start-up entrepreneurship with arguments.
4. Able to use appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and skills in professional business management and research (scientific) work, being aware of the impact of one's activities on the environment and society.

Competences

- Able to plan business process and resources, including time, work, staff, talent, finance, infrastructure.
- Able to participate in the development of international business and start-up entrepreneurship in a global environment, offering innovative solutions to industry problems.

- Able to demonstrate an understanding of and application of professional ethics and culture, including intercultural ones, understanding thereof and respect thereto.

1.8 Is the labour market involved in the development and use of the learning outcomes? If yes, then how?

In HEI survey most of the respondents (29) indicated that representatives of labour market are being involved in the development of learning outcomes. Only few (7) indicated the opposite.

When creating new programmes, employers are involved in discussions about the desired result, knowledge, skills and competences. Employers conduct separate lecture courses, thus including the current topical issues in the course content. During the development of the programme, surveys, interviews, consultations with employers are conducted to understand what is needed, on the basis of which the concept, content, goal and learning outcomes of the programme are developed. In the implementation of the programme, programme councils are also developed where they in cooperation with employers discuss topical issues and necessary changes in study courses. Some HEIs have established study programme/direction councils to discuss the development of new study courses or significant changes to existing study courses to meet the labour market requirements. These councils often have representatives of employers who participate in the development of the programme with their recommendations. In this context, learning outcomes are also discussed, i.e., whether the acquired knowledge, skills and competences meet the needs of the labour market, and employers tend to suggest changes and additions to learning outcomes.