



Europe Note

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Results of the 2009 UK HE Europe Unit survey on UK HEIs engagement in European HE developments - UK

Introduction

1. This E-note informs UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and interested stakeholders of the results of the Europe Unit's survey of UK HEIs in 2009. Survey responses demonstrate that UK HEIs have increased their engagement with the European higher education agenda. It also provides information on areas where future action is needed. The Europe Unit would like to thank HEIs for their assistance in responding to the survey.
2. The data from the survey was collected over the period from September 2009 to January 2010 using an online survey tool. Separate E-notes have been developed with results for England and Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Visit the Europe Unit website for more information: www.europeunit.ac.uk

KEY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 2009 SURVEY

- **There has been a 14% increase in the number of UK HEIs issuing the Diploma Supplement to students since 2007.**
- **There is growing confidence that UK credit systems and qualifications frameworks are compatible with overarching European systems. Where the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is not used for credit transfer or accumulation, the main reason given is that the credit systems already in use are compatible with ECTS.**
- **There continues to be great diversity in the nature of Masters degrees in the UK, although there are fewer two year Masters degrees being offered than in 2007. The number of institutions offering one-year Masters degrees has increased since 2007.**
- **Degrees that are traditionally of two years duration (MRes, MPhil) are increasingly being offered as one-year options.**
- **The number of HEIs offering Integrated Masters degree programmes in the UK appears stable. HEIs are developing Integrated Masters programmes in new disciplines.**
- **The number of respondents aware of recognition difficulties for graduates of UK programmes remains the same as in 2007. Spain and Greece remain the two countries where difficulties are most experienced. North America has emerged as a region where some UK HEIs are reporting difficulties in admission to graduate schools.**
- **68% of respondents have measures in place to promote staff mobility, 85% of respondents to promote both staff and student mobility.**
- **58% of respondents have assigned a particular staff member/committee/group with responsibility for Bologna Process issues (24% in 2007); a clear reflection of the growing importance of the Bologna Process agenda in the UK.**

Survey objectives and content

3. The Europe Unit survey to assess UK HEIs engagement in European initiatives follows earlier surveys in 2005 and 2007¹. The survey included questions on the following issues:
 - Diploma Supplement;
 - use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system;
 - Masters degrees, including Integrated Masters programmes;
 - recognition of UK qualifications elsewhere in Europe;
 - institutional strategies and responsibility for Bologna; and
 - joint degrees.
4. The survey questions in 2009 differed slightly from 2007 to allow HEIs to give more context to their answers and provide examples of institutional engagement. The Leuven Communiqué in April 2009² and the launch of the European Higher Education Area in March 2010 prompted the Europe Unit to ask two new questions: UK HEIs' policies on staff and student mobility, and their overall assessment of the Bologna Process.

Analysis of respondents

5. As the membership of Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE has changed over the years, so too has the size of the Europe Unit survey sample. The 2009 survey was sent out to 157 HEIs in the UK³ and 92 HEIs responded. This is the same number of respondents as in 2007, but as the number of recipients has increased since 2007, the overall response rate is slightly lower at 59%. The response rate to the survey of the different countries in the UK is in line with the distribution of HEIs throughout the UK.

	UK (response rate in brackets)	Wales	Scotland	E/NI
2009	92 (59%)	10 (83%)	9 (64%)	73 (55%)
2007	92 (60%)	12 (100%)	13 (62%)	68 (57%)
2005	85 (53%)	7 (61%)	12 (57%)	66 (42%)

6. 53% of respondents were from HEI Registry departments. The remaining responses were primarily from International and European Offices, academic staff and then an even spread of representatives across other categories/departments.

¹ To view the results of the 2005 survey, visit: <http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/resources/E-05-13.doc>. To view the results of the 2007 survey, visit: http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/resources/E-07-07.pdf

² Leuven Communiqué, 28-29 April 2009, http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communiqé_April_2009.pdf

³ The survey was sent to all members of Universities UK (133) and all full members and associate members of GuildHE (29). GuildHE shares three full members and one associate member with UUK. The survey was sent to 14 HEIs in Scotland in 2009 compared with 21 in 2007; to 132 HEIs in England and Northern Ireland in 2009 compared with 117 in 2007; and to 12 HEIs in Wales in 2009 compared with 15 in 2007.

Diploma Supplement

7. 74% of HEIs currently issue the Diploma Supplement (DS) – an increase of 14 percentage points to the proportion of HEIs issuing the DS in 2007. Much of this increase has taken place in England and Northern Ireland⁴. The decline in the number of HEIs issuing the DS in Scotland may be due to a lower response rate in Scotland to the 2009 survey.

DS Implementation rate	UK	Wales	Scotland	England & Northern Ireland
2009	74%	75%	50%	73%
2007	60%	58%	62%	57%
2005	28%	75%	42%	20%

8. Over half of the HEIs who issue the DS do so automatically to students graduating with an undergraduate and postgraduate level qualification, and about a quarter issue it on an ad-hoc basis. A paper-based format appears to be standard, although eight institutions issue the DS electronically (up from three in 2007). 32 HEIs issue the DS to doctoral graduates: 22 do so automatically, the others on an ad-hoc basis.
9. Of those issuing the DS, 81% use the standard format developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. This compares with 58% which used the standard format in 2007.
10. 64% have not received any feedback from students and/or employers that the DS is useful. However, when asked what are the benefits of issuing the DS to the institution, respondents commonly replied:
- the DS is useful to graduates applying for further study, both in the UK and Europe;
 - employers can use it to better assess an applicant to a job, but it is probably too wordy to be used as an initial tool; and
 - the DS is readable across Europe.
11. HEIs that do not issue the DS quote IT difficulties as the main reason. The second reason is that HEIs are awaiting developments in the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) before committing to produce a DS. 33% of those not yet issuing the DS intend to do so in the academic year 2010/11.
12. 49% of respondents have received a DS issued by HEIs elsewhere in Europe, while 30% have received one from another HEI in the UK. 76% of HEIs find that the DS is a useful tool for evaluating students' achievements and supporting admissions procedures, 24% do not.

⁴ The Higher Education Funding Council for England collected more accurate data on the use of the DS in England and Northern Ireland in its annual monitoring statement in 2008.

Credit

13. 56% use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for the purposes of credit transfer, 25% use it for accumulation, and 22% use it for both.
14. The large majority of institutions that do not use ECTS do so because they already use a credit system that is compatible with ECTS. This suggests a greater confidence among institutions about the compatibility of UK credit systems and qualifications frameworks with overarching European systems⁵.

Masters programmes

15. 92% of respondents offer Masters programmes (same figure as in 2007). There were 351 one-year Masters programmes being offered in 2009 (323 in 2007). This may reflect a growing confidence in the UK one-year Masters programme.
16. There are fewer two-year Masters degree programmes being offered (80 in 2009, 125 in 2007). Masters programmes that are traditionally of two years duration (MRes, MPhil) are increasingly being offered as a one-year course.

	1 calendar year, full-time (or equivalent)	2 calendar years, full-time (or equivalent)	Other (please specify duration)
Master of Science (MSc)	77	15	8
Master of Arts (MA)	73	15	6
Master of Education (MEd)	39	3	3
Master of Law (LLM)	56	5	4
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	64	8	9
Masters degree by research (MPhil)	42	34	10
None of the above	1	0	2

17. Examples of other types of programmes being offered include one, two, and three-year MBAs, part-time Masters programmes over a three year period, and programmes lasting between 15 and 18 months.

⁵ The UK HE Europe Unit published guidance on the relationship between UK arrangements for academic credit and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/resources/E-09-06_ECTS_Users'Guide.pdf

Integrated Masters programmes

18. 58% offer full-time Integrated Masters programmes (60% in 2007 and 2005) of which 89% are MEng degrees.

Degree title	2007	2009
MPharm	15	19
MEng	45	47
MMaths	18	23
MSci	16	20
MChem	28	27
MPhys	20	23
MStat	2	2

19. UK HEIs are developing new types of Integrated Masters programmes, such as MComp (Computer Science – 6 responses), MGeoSci (Geographical Sciences – 3 responses), MPlan (Planning), MFA (Fine Arts), and MChiro (Chiropractic).
20. 75% of HEIs providing Integrated Masters programmes award a Masters qualification only at the end of the Masters stage of the programme (81% in 2007) as opposed to 12.5% of HEIs offering a Bachelor qualification after the Bachelor stage and a Masters qualification after the Masters stage (7% in 2007), and 12.5% of HEIs offering both qualifications at the Masters stage (11% in 2007)⁶.
21. 20% have incorporated work placements into the summer vacation (the majority offer placements both within the UK and elsewhere in Europe) while 14% have incorporated teaching. Both types of placement carry assessed learning outcomes. Only two respondents extended the timescale for submission of the dissertation to extend the duration of the Integrated Masters degree programme.
22. Three institutions responded that they did not allocate a minimum of 60 ECTS credits at Masters level (eight HEIs in 2007)⁷.

⁶ Europe Unit guidance to UK HEIs in 2005 recommended awarding two degrees (Bachelors and Masters) at the end of the Integrated Masters degree to support recognition of the qualification in Europe as a Masters degree.
http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/resources/E-05-12.doc

⁷ The ECTS credit range for a second cycle qualification in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) is between 60-120 ECTS (with 90-120 being the most common range).

Recognition of UK qualifications

23. Responses also indicate widespread acceptance of UK qualifications in Europe. 66% are not aware of any difficulties experienced by graduates of UK Bachelor and Masters programmes, roughly the same percentage that were not aware of difficulties in recognition of Masters degrees in 2007.

Difficulty	Bachelors	1-year FT Masters	Integrated Masters
Further study, eg admission to Masters/Doctorate	14	12	3
Employment in the private sector	3	2	0
Employment in the public sector	6	5	1
Not aware of any difficulties	56	57	42

Respondents can report difficulty in more than one area.

24. The countries where there were difficulties reported include (in order of frequency of complaint) Greece, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Germany, and Israel. Seven respondents mentioned North America and entry to Masters level study as a particular issue.
25. When asked if the Bologna Process reforms and EU initiatives (DS, ECTS, development of HE qualifications frameworks etc) have improved the situation regarding the recognition of UK degrees in Europe, 97% responded the situation was maintained or had improved. 3% said it made the situation worse.

Staff and student mobility

26. In order to gauge the UK HE sector's potential to contribute to the goal outlined in the Leuven Communiqué (20% of graduates in the EHEA to have had a mobility experience by 2020), the Europe Unit asked institutions if they had measures in place to promote staff and student mobility. 72% of respondents have measures in place to promote staff mobility, 90% have measures to promote student mobility. 12% of respondents have no measures in place to promote either staff or student mobility.
27. The most common method of promoting mobility is participation in the Erasmus programmes. Other measures include the creation of a management group for international education and exchange, promotion of mobility opportunities at student recruitment fairs and open days, individual institutional collaborations with overseas partners, and participation in European and International higher education networks, for example, Universitas 21, Coimbra Group, etc.

Joint degrees

28. The 2009 survey asked HEIs to identify in which regions they had joint degree partners⁸. 51 institutions responded to say they award a joint degree or multiple/dual/double degree in conjunction with one or more HEIs. Of those respondents that issue joint degrees, 68% do so in conjunction with another HEI in the UK, 70% with an HEI within Europe, and 30% with a HEI outside Europe.

	Within the UK	Within Europe	Outside Europe
Joint degrees ⁹	68%	70%	30%
Multiple/dual/double degrees ¹⁰	6%	85%	53%

Institutional Strategies

29. 82% have an International Strategy (74% in 2007) and 40% have a European strategy (41% in 2007). Of those HEIs with a European strategy, 64% have it embedded in their international strategy and 36% have it separate from their international strategies. European strategies appear to cover both teaching and research activities, as well as institutional collaborations on other issues. 17 HEIs specifically mention recruitment of European students as a strategic objective.

30. 58% of respondents (24% in 2007) have assigned a particular staff member/committee/group with responsibility for Bologna Process issues. This is a clear reflection of the growing importance of the Bologna Process agenda in the UK. Academic registrars, Heads and Assistant Heads of International Offices, Vice-Provosts, Directors of Quality, Deans, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Vice-Principals, UK Bologna Experts and academics are all involved in dealing with Bologna Process issues in UK HEIs.

Europe Unit follow-up activity

31. The survey produces useful information for the UK HE sector in terms of progress in meeting Bologna goals as well as identifying areas where more action is required. Following the results of the survey, the UK HE Europe Unit plans the following activities in the coming months:

- continue to liaise with colleagues in the sector to ensure that the development of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) successfully incorporates the Diploma Supplement;
- continue to work with the Quality Assurance Agency, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) and professional and regulatory bodies on recognition difficulties;
- encourage HEIs to relate their credit system to ECTS credits; and
- encourage UK HEIs to share good practice in engaging with the Bologna Process and European Union HE agendas.

⁸ In the 2007 Europe Unit survey, HEIs were first asked if they had the power to award joint degrees. The question was not asked in 2009 to try and reduce the number of questions in the survey.

⁹ Joint degrees - one degree given by two or more HEIs together for a single study programme.

¹⁰ Multiple/dual/double degrees - two or more degrees given by two or more higher education institutions for the same study programme separately developed by and implemented in every participating higher education institution.