

# APL – The Norwegian approach

Stephen Adam: “The Recognition of Prior Learning in the Context of European Trends in Higher Education and Lifelong Learning”:

- *"Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) refers to the recognition (or not) of certificated learning (learning formally assessed by another body) for the purpose of **access** (credit entry) to a programme, or **exemption** (credit exemption) from part of a programme of study within national and/or international context."*



- a brief presentation of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Norway
- Increase in the focus on the internationalization of the universities
- who does what in regard to the recognition of foreign qualifications in Norway
- the laws and regulations that apply to this field in Norway: The Lisbon Convention and the Norwegian Act relating to universities and university colleges



# The Bologna Process in Norway: “The Quality Reform”

- Do your duty – demand your right - The Quality Reform (implemented in 2003)
- This was a major reform of the Norwegian system of higher education. Most provisions of the Bologna Declaration have been incorporated in this reform.
- A new degree structure: new titles for the degrees: Bachelor degree, Masters degree and PhD for the doctoral level (3 + 2 + 3)
- A more intensive follow-up of students (implementing individual education plans) New examination and assessment methods



## *(Bologna in Norway: cont.)*

- Diploma Supplement from 2000: issued automatically and free of charge to all students, in English. UiB has a DS Label.
- A new credit system: 30 ECTS cr. = one semester's full workload
- A new grading system based on the ECTS-system (A-E for pass and F for fail)
- The establishment of The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance (NOKUT)
- Focus on internationalisation



# The Faculty of Arts implemented The Reform in 2002.

- By 2003 the reform was implemented at all higher education institutions in Norway.
- More students are now completing their bachelor's degree within the time allotted (3 years).
- The average student earns 43 ECTS credits per year.
- The curriculum is structured/tailored for three years (bachelor) and covers certain disciplines or may also be *cross disciplinary*.
- The bachelor programmes must include an *opportunity for students to study at least one semester abroad*.
- Modularisation of the subjects began prior to the implementation of the reform.



# A special focus on internationalisation:

**The students are encouraged to spend a semester or two abroad:**

- Every institution is obligated to internationalize their activities and to enable every Norwegian student to include a period of study-abroad in a Norwegian degree.
- All the Bachelor Study Programmes must give the students an opportunity to study a semester abroad.
- Recommend a few universities for each bachelor study programme
- Increasing number of students going abroad for a semester



- Goal of our University: 20 % of our students for a semester or two during their bachelor's degree
- The credits earned abroad can either be recognised as equivalent in scope, content and level to a particular course offered at home, or they can be used as elective credits/courses in a bachelor programme.
- All bachelor programmes should include at least 15 such elective credits, and in some programmes the students have a free choice of courses up to 60 ECTS credits.
- 260 exchange agreements with universities around the world



# The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund

provides extra support for students going abroad:

- **Travel expenses:**

two return trips per year between the student's home town in Norway and the educational institution abroad. 70 percent is given as a grant and 30 percent as a loan.

- **Language grants.** Students who are enrolled at non-English speaking institutions may be eligible for a language grant. The grant for 2005-2006 is NOK 15 000, about 1800 euro. Language courses must be four weeks long and must be completed before the student starts the degree programme.

- **Tuition support.** Students in countries other than the Nordic countries may receive support for all or parts of the tuition fee, partly as a loan and partly as a grant.



# Financial incentives to Norwegian institutions

Norwegian institutions are provided with financial incentives for admitting foreign students and to sending out our own students, for a period of more than three months:

- For each student we receive or send out via our bilateral exchange agreements and who completes a study period of more than three months, the faculty receives close to 6000 N. kr. (about 700 euro).



## *Problems with transferring credit points:*

- *The actual work load is often greater abroad*
- *The students are required to take the same amount of credits as the local students.*
- *Different universities have different requirements (concerning number of credits as full work load) for the students they are sending out*
- *Number of teaching hours versus ECTS credits*





# Recognition of foreign higher education qualifications

- Foreign qualifications are recognized in accordance with Norwegian law and international agreements that Norway has ratified.
- Academic recognition involves assessing foreign qualifications in relation to Norwegian higher education qualifications. In Norway we make a distinction between *general recognition* and *subject specific recognition*:



# *General recognition*

of foreign education qualifications in Norway means that they are considered wholly or partially equivalent to Norwegian higher education qualifications. An assessment is also made of the extent of their equivalence in terms of years of study and ECTS credits compared with Norwegian qualifications. General recognition may also result in recognition of foreign higher education qualifications as being equivalent to a Norwegian degree: bachelor's, master's or PhD degree.

- The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is an independent government body which considers individual applications for general recognition of foreign qualifications.



# *Specific recognition*

- is granted by individually accredited higher education institutions. They recognize foreign qualifications in relation to subject specific degrees awarded at the institution. They decide whether a foreign qualification matches the specific scope and depth requirements of the degree which they award themselves.



# Transfer of credits

- **Recognition for further study in Norway:**  
an applicant who has completed only part of a degree or study or study programme at an institution of higher education (abroad), or has only been granted partial equivalence for a foreign degree.
- Students who have university studies from outside Norway, beyond what is required for admission to higher education in Norway, may apply to have these studies evaluated for possible credit transfer within the Norwegian degree system.
- When a student has been admitted to a programme of study and is enrolled at a Norwegian institution. The application is sent to the relevant university or college
- Applications are evaluated individually and in relation to corresponding subjects in a Norwegian programme of study/degree.
- The application must therefore include as much information as possible about the relevant courses taken outside Norway: course descriptions, reading lists and (sometimes) written theses.





# The Lisbon convention

- **The aim of the Lisbon convention is to facilitate an increase of academic mobility:**

The parties to this convention:

*”Considering that the great diversity of education systems in the European region reflects its cultural, social, political, philosophical, religious and economic diversity, an exceptional asset which should be fully respected;”*

***Norway ratified the Lisbon Convention in April 1999 and it was effected June 1 the same year.***



# Section V – Recognition of periods of study

## Article V.1

- Each Party shall recognize periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education programme in another Party. This recognition shall comprise such periods of study towards the completion of a higher education programme in the Party in which recognition is sought, unless *substantial differences* can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education programme which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought.



# Norwegian law: Act relating to universities and university colleges (from April 1, 2005)

## Section 3-5. Exemption from an examination or test

- Exemption from an examination or test shall be granted when it has been shown that a corresponding examination or test has been taken at the same or another institution.
- Such exemption may also be granted on the basis of another suitable examination or test. Documentation of prior learning (formal and non-formal) may also provide a basis for exemption. The Ministry may order the institutions to coordinate their practice. The board decides whether the faculty concerned or a special body at the institution shall decide on exemptions.



## Section 3-6. Educational qualifications for **entrance** to higher education

- (1) The general basis for admission as a student (the general entrance requirement) is successful completion of the Norwegian upper secondary school and fulfilment of the requirements regarding subject combinations and hours of study laid down by the Ministry. The Ministry may stipulate that other suitable education or combinations of education and work experience shall constitute a general basis for admission. The institution shall consider whether applicants hold qualifications corresponding to the stipulated entrance requirements.
- (2) The institutions may grant applicants who are 25 years of age or older in the admission year admission to specific courses if they on the basis of their prior learning (formal and non-formal) hold the necessary qualifications for the course concerned. The Ministry may issue further provisions concerning documentation, procedures and any coordination.



- (3) The Ministry may in regulations provide that the institutions may in special cases make exceptions from the provision concerning general entrance requirements for applicants under 25 years of age.
- (4) The Ministry may in regulations exempt particular courses or study programmes from the general entrance requirement.
- (5) The Ministry may in regulations impose special entrance requirements when this is required by the progress of the course of study.



# A new regulation for accreditation within higher education

- April 10, 2006: By The ministry of Education and Research:
- This regulation states that a student who has a bachelor's degree may be granted a new bachelor's degree if he/she has taken at least 60 new ects credits or more. Educational institutions may require up to 90 new credits for a new degree, like The University of Bergen has done.
- 60 credits, either the new credits or from the old degree, must have been acquired at the institution issuing the diploma.



- (6) Those admitted to one institution under the present Act are entitled to admission to open courses of study at the others, provided the entrance requirement is the general entrance requirement and the applicant was not admitted pursuant to the second, third or fourth paragraph.
- (7) The board may stipulate minimum academic requirements for admission to higher degree courses.



# **Bachelor's degree: 3 years = 180 ects credits**

A three-year bachelor's degree (180 ects credits) at The University of Bergen consists of:

- 30 credits of introductory courses,
- 90 credits of specialization within a specific academic discipline, and
- 60 credits from other academic disciplines.

To be awarded a second bachelor's degree, a student will still have to fulfill these requirements and they will have to obtain a new 90 credit specialization, since they are not permitted to apply the same specialization to two degrees.



