

NSSP -GREP

A key dimension of the National Social Sciences Platform will be to develop one (or more) collaborative, inter-institutional Graduate Research Education Programme - GREPs

GREP is a Structured PhD

- The structured PhD model has by now been clarified to a great extent at a policy/ sectoral / trans institutional level.
- A PhD will be conducted in 4 years.
- It will be earned by 360 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System).
- It will comprise of a Thesis and Taught Modules

Calculating ECTS

- 10 ECTS are calculated as equivalent to 100 teaching hours (approx).
- Not necessarily 'classroom contact' hours, but, e.g., 10ECTS earned by:
 - 24hrs classroom,
Plus 26hrs directed reading,
Plus 50hrs student-led independent research.

GREP- ECTS distribution

There is still some flux in determining how the ECTS will break down between 'taught modules' and 'thesis.'

The emphasis will be emphatically on the 'thesis', but the 'taught modules' will be essential also.

Taught component will be no more than 90, no less than 30 –it may settle on 60 rather than 90 ECTS.

This need not concern us for the moment. We can develop a model flexible enough to adapt to 30, 60, or 90ECTS. In the meantime we presume the upper ECTS values.

Presumed ECTS breakdown

- 90 ECTS will be earned through Taught modules.
- 270 ECTS will be earned through original research (Thesis)

Structured / taught component

- Of the 90 ECTS earned through taught modules there is an important distinction between:
 - ‘Generic skills training’
- and
- ‘Advanced / specialized education’

Generic Skills & Advanced Education

- ‘Generic skills training’ include, typically, sessions on: ‘applying for research funds;’ ‘time and budget management’; ‘preparing for publication’ etc.
- Generic skills programmes will be provided intra-institutionally, and many of our institutions are already running these (e.g. PATHS at UCC (5ects)).
- They are (‘soft’) skills *training*, not specialized, advanced academic *education*.

Generic skills training, and Advanced Education

- ‘Generic skills training’ modules are typically not formally examined, other than by attendance and participation.
- They are a ‘compulsory requirement’
- They are typically weighted at no more than 5ECTS

Advanced Education Modules

- Advanced Graduate Education modules deliver the substantial intellectual content and specialized knowledge of academic disciplines at postgraduate level.
- Advanced Education modules are formally examined in terms of their substantive intellectual content.

Advanced Education Modules

- Advanced education modules are of two kinds:
- (A). 'Transferable' knowledge - 'high level' academic, intellectual knowledge, transferable across disciplines.
e.g. Theory; Methods; Philosophy of the Social Sciences.

Advanced Education Modules

- (B) ‘Discipline-specific’ corpora of substantive knowledge pertaining to particular fields; e.g.:
 - i. ‘Sociology of the Public Sphere’ (Soc, UCC)
 - ii. ‘Social Policy Debates and Processes’ (DSoc, UCC)
 - iii. ‘Family support: disability, ethnicity & homelessness (Soc & Pol, NUIG)
 - iii. ‘Knowledge management & the learning organization’ (CISC, NUIG)
 - iv. ‘Feminist theory & Textual Practice (L&CS, UL)
 - V. ‘The politics of European Integration (Pol & PA, UL)
 - Vi. ‘Advanced Medical Geography (NIRSA, NUIM)
 - Vii. ‘Collective Memory’ (Soc, NUIM)
 - Viii ‘Politics & Communication in Ireland’ (Comms, DCU)
 - Ix ‘Communication theory & the new media’ (Comms, DCU)

Generic skills training, & Transferable knowledge education

- Only 5 ECTS will accrue to Generic Skills Training.
- But Transferable Knowledge includes advanced education in Theory, Methods & Philosophy of the Social Sciences.
- 25 ECTS may be filled in this category by advanced Theory, Method, Philosophy of the Social Sciences.

Transferable Theory & Method for NSSP?

Given the diversity of disciplines represented by NSSP it may be quite a challenge to identify Theory and Method that will be broad and interdisciplinary enough to encompass our interests.

- But this is by no means impossible, and we will return to it.

Focus on the 60ECTS

- 60ECTS of the total 360 ECTS that comprise the PhD will take the form of advanced / specialized graduate education modules.
- These 60ECTS may be earned through a number of ECTS weighted graduate modules.
- Some graduate modules are already taught by NSSP partners, more are in preparation.

Audit of existing modules

- Identify already existing graduate education modules on offer within the several programmes that are members of NSSP.
- What modules in which institutions are readily available to students associated with the Platform, both intra-institutionally and inter-institutionally?
- What modules, if any, in which institutions, could we make available inter-institutionally by making relatively minor adjustments to them?

Existing and Modifi(able) Modules

- Existing module example:
- Social Change and Civic Health (Soc UCC).
- 10ECTS. (24 hrs classroom; plus 26hrs directed reading; plus 50hrs independent research)
- Delivery: 4 x one-day workshops

Existing and Modifi(able) Modules

- Modifiable module example:
- ‘Moral Geographies’ (Anthropology, NUIM)
- 5ECTS (12hrs classroom)
- Delivery: 6x2hr lectures / seminars.
- Modification needed:
- Add to module description: 13hrs ‘directed reading’, plus 25hrs ‘independent research’
- Change mode of delivery to 2x1-day workshops.

Intra and Inter-institutional modules

- Graduate modules may be delivered and taken:
 - intra-institutionally
 - inter-institutionally
 - internationally

Modes of delivery

- Graduate modules may be taught in a variety of modes:
- Conventionally scheduled graduate seminars (12x2hrs classes) –perhaps made available by video-conferencing
- Concentrated one-day workshops (4x6hrs workshops)
- Summer school(s).
- Variations & combinations of all of the above, with directed reading and online support.

International Modules

- And, of course –for this is the very principle of the ECTS- a student may earn ECTS by taking courses and summer schools offered by other institutions throughout the European Higher Education Area.
- Reciprocally, our own NSSP modules and summer schools will be ECTS weighted, and if they are carefully publicized we should be able to attract EU students into our activities.

Supervision, and student-centered learning

- How exactly any particular student would accumulate 90ECTS (5 generic training, 25 transferable knowledge, plus 60 advanced education) would be a decision agreed between the student and his/ her supervisory committee.
- Graduate education can be ‘tailored’ to suit individual students.

Initial level of collaboration

- The core of our collaboration in the NSSP graduate research education programme should initially be built around the 60 ECTS for advanced graduate education.

Advantages

- Utilizes existing capacity –modules already being taught by platform members.
- Establishes significant level of substantial inter-institutional collaboration as soon as possible, meeting the key evaluation criteria of ‘capacity building’ through ‘real and meaningful collaboration.’
- leaves time for individual institutions to develop their own modules, and for NSSP to develop joint modules.
- modest proportion of the overall PhD structure.
- modest teaching resource demands;
- disciplines and institutions retain control of PhD;

60 ECTS earned 'at home'

- A student might in fact earn all of their 60 ECTS through modules already available intra-institutionally, i.e. in their 'home' institution.
- While possible, this scenario wouldn't be desirable, as the explicit and emphatic goal of PRTL14 and going forward is to optimize the quality of doctoral education through inter-institutional collaboration.

25 ECTS earned at home?

- The 25 ECTS accruing to high level generic & transferable knowledge (i.e. Theory and Methods, Philosophy of the Social Sciences) may be taken by intra-institutional modules.
- Though not optimal, this may offer an interim solution to the diversity of interdisciplinary interests on NSSP, while we work out how we might construct inter-institutional & interdisciplinary modules in theory & method.

For now: A suite of advanced specialized modules

- The core of the inter-institutional collaborative NSSP –GREP should consist of a suite of ECTS weighted graduate education modules, drawn from the various disciplines and institutions represented in the consortium, made available across the Platform as options from which students, in consultation with their supervisor(s) may select in order to earn 60 ECTS.

For the future: 25ECTS

Transferable knowledge?

- Intra-institutional, discipline specific Theory & Methods, Philosophy of the Social Sciences.
- Identify & designate groups / clusters of Theory and Methods modules across NSSP from which students and supervisors could choose.
- Design our own inter-institutional and interdisciplinary modules in Theory, Method, Philosophy of the Social Sciences using resources from across NSSP (delivered by NSSP summer school)