

Tuning Educational Structures in the World

Foundation of TUNING Centres world-wide

Background information

Tuning Educational Structures is an initiative of the academic world which has been strongly supported by the European Commission of the European Union from its launch in 2001. The European Commission has not only (co-)financed all Tuning projects and studies, it has also initiated many of them.

Tuning Educational Structures is a university-driven process, which offers a universal approach to higher educational reforms both at the macro-level of entire higher educational institutions and at the micro-level of individual disciplines or subject areas. The Tuning approach consists of a methodology to (re-)design, develop, implement and evaluate study programmes for each cycle (bachelor's, master's and doctoral/ undergraduate and (post-)graduate studies).

Tuning serves as a platform for developing reference points, descriptors or standards - as part of conceptual frameworks - at sectoral /domain level (e.g. Humanities, Creative and Performing Arts, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Health Care and Engineering) as well as subject area / disciplinary level. Among the subjects for which conceptual frameworks have been developed are: chemistry, physics, mathematics, earth sciences, medicine, nursing, history, art history, linguistics, literary studies, law, social work, music, performing arts, creative arts, architecture, education sciences including teacher training, business administration, sociology, different types of engineering and area studies and gender studies (the last two being samples of interdisciplinary studies). Tuning has also developed frameworks for the sectors Engineering, Social Sciences, Humanities and Creative and Performing Arts. The work that has been done is based on wide stakeholder consultation, including employers, graduates, students and academic staff.

Frameworks are relevant for making programmes of studies comparable, compatible and transparent in a national as well as an international context. These are based on identified and agreed learning outcomes and competences, distinguishing between generic or transversal and subject-specific ones. Tuning contributes to the development and enhancement of high-quality competitive study programmes by focusing on fitness of purpose (to meet expectations) and fitness for purpose (to meet aims).

The Tuning methodology has proven to be of interest and relevance in all parts of the world. Projects and/or feasibility studies have been implemented – besides Europe - in the following countries/regions: Latin America, Georgia, Central Asia, Russia, the United States of America, Africa, Australia, Canada, China, Middle East and North Africa and very recently India. Furthermore, institutions and organisations in other geographical regions,

like Japan, the Gulf States and South-East Asia, have shown interest in using the Tuning methodology.

Finally, the OECD Secretariat, at the invitation of the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) Group of National Experts, contracted in 2009 the Tuning Association to undertake initial development work on learning outcomes to be used for valid and reliable assessments of students from diverse institutions and countries in two areas, engineering and economics.

Tuning Centres

Tuning Centres are meant to be key instruments to facilitate dissemination and implementation of the Tuning approach. The Centres are also intended as an institutionalised tool to establish and support links with employers, graduates and academics in the area of programme design, implementation and enhancement as well as to engage with relevant governmental bodies, policy makers, international, national, regional and local organisations and higher education institutions and their management to contribute to policy development in the field of higher education.

The Tuning Centres have evolved during the lifetime of the Tuning initiative. At present three different types are distinguished: 1) **The International Tuning Academy**¹; 2) **Tuning National Centres** (TNCs); and 3) **Tuning University Centres** (TUCs). The first type was established after 10 years of intensive cooperation between the University of Deusto and the University of Groningen. It originates from being information and dissemination points in Europe during the Tuning Europe project, to assist individual teachers, Universities and sectors to adapt to the Bologna Process using Tuning methodologies and project outcomes. The second type resulted from the first Latin America Tuning Project which started in 2003 and represents the starting point of the institutionalisation and globalisation of Tuning. The third type was initiated as part of the Tuning Russia project in 2010 to offer a sustainable structure for reform within the context of individual higher education institutions.

It is the Tuning policy to establish Tuning National Centres and Tuning University Centres in each of the countries involved in the Tuning world-wide process. The three types mentioned above and outlined below represent the model to be applied globally. For Europe the structure presented here replaces the Tuning Information Points (TIPs) which have been established as part of the Tuning Europe projects.

1) International Tuning Academy

The International Tuning Academy is the central unit of the Tuning worldwide process. It contains two branches located at the two universities which have jointly – in close conjunction with the European Commission - coordinated all Tuning projects around the

¹ <http://www.tuningacademy.org>

world since its launch: the University of Deusto in Spain and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. The Academy is the home base of the Tuning initiative and an International Higher Education and Research Centre for the development and enhancement of the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in higher education, focusing on the competences for intellectual development, employability and citizenship in a global context.

The International Tuning Academy intends to be an organisation which permanently monitors developments regarding social demands and future employability needs, as an input for playing a key role in Higher Education policy innovation and curriculum development through research and debate.

The aims and objectives of the International Tuning Academy are:

- sustaining and disseminating the use of the Tuning methodology as developed of reference frameworks and updating these on the basis of consultation and debate, preferably in an international context;
- initiating and implementing projects and studies related to the modernisation, enhancement and internationalisation of higher education;
- guaranteeing the scientific-academic quality of all projects developed under the Tuning designation;
- promoting and realizing conferences, seminars and workshops of experts and policy makers in the field of higher education;
- sustaining and promoting international Tuning related networks;
- pursuing developments which highlight the relevance of existing and new competences – generic and subject specific – in today's and tomorrow's dynamic society as input for updating profiles in a LLL-context.
- offering staff development programmes for curriculum development, methods of learning, teaching and assessment, the use of student workload based credit points, calculating student workload, preparing degree programme profiles and identifying related competences, writing of (programme learning outcomes);
- offering advice and support to (inter) authorities and public and private organisations in relation to modernising educational systems, structures and individual degree programmes;
- fostering and realizing publications which promote the aims and objectives of the Tuning Academy.

2) Tuning National Centres

Tuning National Centres (TNCs) are meant to be a country's central contact point with respect to Tuning activities. A TNC is closely related to the national authorities in the field of higher education. This can be the Ministry of Education, a relevant governmental body or branch, a national organisation of universities or a conference of rectors or principals, the national accreditation body, etc. Important is that it represents a close link between the educational system of a country and Tuning and is able to act as a reliable spokesperson

at country level for developments taking place. It is up to each country to decide on the most effective and appropriate organisation.

The role of a TNC is to:

- inform all higher education institutions in the country about relevant (inter)national Tuning projects and studies initiated and their outcomes and to involve higher education institutions and other stakeholders indirectly in these initiatives;
- serve as a central information point for Tuning initiatives taken elsewhere in the worldwide by keeping a close connection to the Tuning Academy;
- establish and sustain contacts and cooperation with other NTCs in the world;
- serve as a bridge and coordination point between the Academy and the Tuning Centres in a country (see below);
- initiate Tuning based initiatives at national level by bringing together stakeholders or facilitate cooperation between stakeholders in higher education. This can be related to policy issues, restructuring or enhancing parts of the educational system, but also to academic sectors or domains or individual disciplines or subject areas. This activity might require close cooperation with Tuning Centres at expert level (see below) in the country;
- run a national Tuning information website as a key instrument for information, dissemination and stimulating debate among stakeholders;
- act as a service point for the distribution of written material in a foreign language, or better, the national language. The latter might imply initiating the translation of material produced by the Tuning Academy or Tuning projects and studies;
- organise conferences, seminars and workshops, facilitating dialogue and debate about relevant issues at stake;
- contribute to the developing of ideas and initiatives to promote the Tuning philosophy in a coordinated way at global level;
- participate in international activities lead by the Tuning Academy.

Each NTC draws-up a work or activity plan for each academic or financial year (depending on the country involved). This activity plan is submitted to the Tuning Academy together with a report about the implementation of the activities of the previous year for validation purposes.

3) Tuning University Centres

Tuning University Centres have been established for the continued dissemination of the Tuning methodology, the project outcomes and for information on the Tuning materials that are available for use also after a project has ended.

Each **Tuning University Centre** is an institutional structure which **operates in a co-ordinated manner** with the Tuning Academy, the Tuning National Centre and other Tuning University Centres in a country (and in other parts of the world). The organisational form of Tuning University Centres is defined by each University but it should be located in

a department/unit/office of the University. For that purpose, the Universities involved in a Tuning project should provide facilities and staff in charge of the Tuning University Centre.

There are **three levels** of operation which can be applied by the Tuning University Centres:

- 1) Dissemination (*Basic level*)
- 2) Consolidation (*Advanced level*)
- 3) Staff Development (*Expert level*)

1) Dissemination: the basic aim of the Tuning University Centre is to disseminate within the University the Tuning material developed so far. A more structured strategy is required, to make the outcomes of Tuning known to all relevant players on institutional level. The main tasks of Tuning University Centre at this stage are:

- Distribution of information and instruction material (developed in Tuning projects in the world) within the institution;
- Assisting in the organisation of dissemination seminars and conferences at institutional level (internal level);
- Offering information and counselling at different stages at the University (departments, faculties, academic staff, students, etc.);
- Acting as an interface between the institution and the International Tuning Academy.

All Tuning University Centres should carry out these activities of dissemination. Each Tuning Centre should prepare a work plan on dissemination to be sent to the Tuning Academy for validation. At the end of each year a report describing the activities developed, results achieved and other comments should be submitted to the Tuning Academy for evaluation and confirmation of the level of the Centre.

2) Consolidation: The main aim of this stage is to consolidate the outcomes of the Tuning methodology within the University. At this level, **some** Tuning University Centres could decide that their purpose is not only to disseminate results but also to realize actual implementation in practice. This implies an advanced level is **not compulsory** to all Tuning University Centres. The main tasks at this level are to:

- invite as many subject areas as possible at the University to define reference points for their disciplines;
- assist subject areas at the University level in the use of the Tuning methodology and its related tools and products;
- design degree profiles following Tuning methodology;
- strengthen and improve the foundation of the Tuning approach, ask the academic community at the University to reflect on its methodology of curriculum design, including degree profiles based on the notions of social needs, available resources, preparing competences and learning outcomes and meta profiles ;
- collect main obstacles and questions regarding the implementation of the Tuning approach at institutional level.

The process of consolidation should be accompanied by a structure for finding answers to questions that will be raised and problems that will be brought forward during this process at the University level. It is thought very useful that each Tuning University Centre **develops research lines** linked to the Tuning Academy.

Each Tuning University Centre should prepare a work plan on consolidation (explaining expected outcomes, stages, activities, resources, etc.) and send it to the Tuning Academy for feedback. The Tuning Academy will evaluate the proposal and comment on the procedure. An evaluation of the process will be developed by the Tuning Academy checking the design of the different degree profiles based on the Tuning methodology. At least **75% of the degree programmes** must be (re)designed using the Tuning approach in order to continue with the next level.

3) Staff Development: the main aim of this stage is to proceed with the consolidation and implementation phase of Tuning at institutional and national level. The different subject areas at University level will reflect and evaluate the material that has been developed by them during the consolidation phase and provide internal and external training. The Tuning Centre will also be used as the vehicle (think tank) to find answers to new issues raised, which are related to the use of the Tuning approach in practice in new fields (for example new skills for new jobs). These training activities must be strengthened by research developed jointly between the Tuning University Centre and the Tuning Academy. The main tasks at this level are to:

- organise internal training seminars / workshops for the implementation of competence-based programmes and Tuning approach within University (how to teach, learn and evaluate competences);
- encourage the use of the Tuning methodology and related tools and products to other universities at national level;
- organise training (together with the Tuning Academy) for the external community at national level;
- provide counselling to other universities in relation to the implementation of the Tuning methodology;
- produce instruction material and guidelines on how to use the Tuning approach in the most effective way at national level. This implies the promotion of best practice examples of learning outcomes and competence based cycle programmes as well as best ways of preparing and writing learning outcomes phrased in terms of competences on programme and course unit/module level;
- participate in international activities lead by the Tuning Academy.

This level of implementation will start after the completion of Consolidation phase. Each Tuning University Centre should prepare a work plan for the training activities and send it to the Tuning Academy for approval. The Tuning Academy will evaluate the proposal and comment on the plan. Cooperation with the Tuning Academy in some of the training seminars/workshops is a possibility.