FIBAA Guidelines on Creating a Grade Distribution Table

Reference: ECTS Users's Guide S. 39 - 41

General Information

Grading practices differ not only between countries, but also across institutions and subject areas. These differences reflect **diverse academic traditions**, but they must be made transparent to ensure **fair recognition of student performance**.

Students participating in **mobility programmes** have the right to fair treatment and transparency regarding their grades, especially when transferring credits. Their academic results can influence access to further studies, scholarships, or other opportunities.

Transparency of performance levels is equally important for graduates entering the **job market** both domestically and abroad.

Each HEI should the following to their graduates:

1. **National/Institutional Grading Scale** and explanation of the scale
2. **Grade Distribution Table**: Statistical distribution table of passing grades awarded in the programme or field of study

What is the Grade Distribution Table for?

Purpose of Grade Distribution Tables

- Show how the existing national or institutional scale is actually used in the institution.
- Enable comparison with the statistical distribution of grades in a parallel reference group of another institution.

Standardisation Requirements

- Developed in a **standardised format** for reference groups of students.
- Based on **degree programmes belonging to the same field of studies**.
- Groups should be of **reliable size** (in terms of number of students and number of years considered).

The higher education institution must ensure that grade distribution information is made **available to all students** through their **Transcript of Records** and/or **Diploma Supplement** upon graduation.

This requirement should be specified in the institution's **binding academic regulations** or **quality assurance policy**.

How to calculate the Grade Distribution Table?

In addition to the national/institutional grading scale with its explanation (Grading Table), the HEI should provide a **Grade Distribution Table** showing the statistical distribution of passing grades in the respective programme or field of study. **This table must reflect how the grading scale is actually applied in that programme.**

FIBAA requires the **final programme-level** Grade Distribution Table, not data per course or semester. The table should present the **overall distribution of final graduation grades** for graduates over a defined **reference period of at least two years**.

Calculating the grade distribution tables is a task that in many institutions will be undertaken at centralised level.

How to proceed:

1. **Identify the reference groups** within your institution by using objective and transparent criteria which should be attached to the grade distribution tables produced.[1]
2. Calculate the **absolute number of passing grades awarded to each reference group** identified in **at least the last two years**.
3. Calculate the grade distribution in terms of percentages of the passing grades awarded to the reference group and develop cumulative percentages. As a result, there will be a **grade distribution table with percentages and cumulative percentages for each reference group** identified.

Example[2] of a Grade Distribution Table

Reference group[3]: Graduates of the study programme Business Administration (1,000 graduates)
Reference period: Graduates of 2023-2025

Grades used in institution (from highest to lowest passing grade)*	Number of passing grades awarded to the reference group	Percentage of each grade with respect to the total passing grades awarded	Cumulative percentage of passing grades awarded
10	50	5%	5%
9	100	10%	15%
8	350	35%	50%
7	300	30%	80%
6	200	20%	100%
Total:	1,000	100%	

* Grading systems/approaches may be established at national level.

The table above illustrates how an **institution's grade distribution** is presented according to the ECTS Users' Guide.

The example shows:

- The **grades** of the study programme Business Administration used by the institution (from highest (10) to lowest passing grade (6)),
- The number of **passing grades** awarded within the reference group (1,000 graduates of the study programme Business Administration),

[1] In the absence of methods based on comparable learning outcomes, it is recommended to use the ISCED-F classification which offers a standardised and hierarchical classification of fields of study. To have reference groups that are large enough for a statistically relevant comparison, it is recommended to use an ISCED code at the 'narrow' or 'detailed' levels (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014).
[2] The numbers shown here are for illustration only and may differ from those at your HEI.
[3] The reference group typically consists of all students who passed in a specific subject area or programme over a sufficiently long period (usually two to three years) to ensure statistical reliability.

- The **percentage** each grade represents of the total passing grades (5% for grade 10, 10% for grade 9, etc.), and
- The **cumulative percentage** (5% for grade 10; grades 10 and 9 together account for 15% of all passing grades, etc.).

By analysing these percentages and cumulative values, institutions can determine which students fall into the top 10%, next 25%, and so on.

Template for a Grade Distribution Table

Feel free to use our template or design your own to create your grade distribution table.

Reference group: Graduates of the study programme / field of study XX (YY graduates)
Reference period: Graduates of ZZ-ZZ

Grades used in institution (from highest to lowest passing grade)*	**Number of passing grades awarded to the reference group**	**Percentage of each grade with respect to the total passing grades awarded**	**Cumulative percentage of passing grades awarded**
	Total:	100%	

* Grading systems/approaches may be established at national level.