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ERUA Framework for awarding 3 ECTS in intensive and innovative learning formats

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1 Purpose of this document

This document provides a common ERUA framework for the design, justification, and transparent awarding of **3 ECTS credits** in intensive, mobile, and innovative learning formats across the alliance. It responds to a practical need within ERUA: to support course designers, coordinators, and partner institutions in ensuring that short and intensive educational formats are academically robust, clearly documented, and recognisable within the ECTS framework.

The document is based on a simple principle: ECTS credits are awarded for achieved learning outcomes supported by a realistic and assessable student workload, not for participation, mobility, or contact hours alone. This principle is especially important in ERUA intensive formats, where learning is often distributed across preparation, on-site participation, collaborative work, reflection, and assessment

ECTS principles for ERUA intensive and mobile learning formats

1.1. What are ECTS credits?

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) provides a common framework across the European Higher Education Area for describing the volume of learning required to achieve defined learning outcomes. Within ERUA, it offers a shared basis for designing, documenting, and recognising learning in both conventional and innovative educational formats. The understanding of this common framework will help teachers and researchers to prepare future innovative teaching activities.

ECTS is based on three core principles:

- credits are awarded only when the intended learning outcomes have been successfully achieved.
- credits reflect the total student workload of the student, not only contact hours or teaching time.
- workload includes all learning activities necessary for students to reach the expected outcomes.

As a general reference:

- 1 ECTS credit corresponds to approximately 25 to 30 hours of student workload.
- 3 ECTS credits correspond to approximately 75 to 90 hours of student workload.

This principle is particularly important in ERUA intensive and mobile learning formats, where substantial learning may take place before, during, and after a short in-person or mobility-based phase.

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1.2. What counts as student workload?

Student workload includes the full range of academic activities required to achieve the intended learning outcomes, regardless of where the learning takes place or how it is organised.

Typical components of workload may include:

- preparatory reading and study;
- participation in lectures, seminars, workshops, or field-based activities;
- guided learning and supervised work;
- independent or collaborative work;
- project development and problem-solving tasks;
- reflection and self-assessment;
- preparation of assignments, portfolios, or presentations;
- assessment and feedback-related activities.

In this framework, ECTS credits are not linked to attendance alone. They are awarded for learning that is planned, carried out, assessed, and successfully achieved.

1.3. ECTS in intensive and mobile learning formats

Intensive courses, short-term schools, and travelling seminars differ from traditional semester-based courses in their delivery pattern, but not in their academic requirements. Their shorter duration does not reduce the need for clear learning outcomes, realistic workload planning, and appropriate assessment.

In these formats, learning is typically distributed across three phases:

- **before** the intensive or mobility period, through preparation and orientation; **during** the intensive phase, through active participation in structured learning activities; **after** the intensive phase, through consolidation, reflection, project completion, or assessment.

ECTS credits can therefore be awarded in intensive and mobile formats when the course design demonstrates that:

- the learning outcomes are clearly defined;
- the student workload is realistic, sufficient, and transparent;
- the assessment method allows achievement to be verified.

This approach is especially relevant for ERUA, where innovative and transnational learning formats are central to the educational offer and must remain academically robust as well as institutionally recognisable.

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1.4. Learning outcomes as the basis for awarding credits

Learning outcomes describe what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do upon successful completion of a learning activity. They form the basis for academic design and for the awarding of ECTS credits.

Within the ECTS framework, learning outcomes serve three connected functions:

- they guide the design of teaching and learning activities;
- they determine the level and type of workload required;
- they provide the reference point for assessment.

In ERUA intensive and innovative learning formats, learning outcomes often extend beyond disciplinary knowledge alone and may include:

- applied and transferable skills;
- interdisciplinary understanding;
- collaboration and communication;
- critical reflection;
- problem-solving in real or complex contexts.

A well-designed course ensures that these outcomes are explicit, feasible within the proposed workload, and supported by suitable learning activities.

1.5. The role of assessment

Assessment is the process through which learning outcomes are demonstrated and verified.It is therefore an essential condition for awarding ECTS credits.

In intensive and innovative learning formats, assessment may take various forms depending on the course design, such as:

- project outputs;
- analytical or reflective written work;
- portfolios or learning diaries;
- oral presentations, demonstrations, or group reporting.

Whatever form it takes, assessment should:

- align clearly with the intended learning outcomes;
- reflect the nature of the learning process and activities;
- allow verification of individual student achievement.

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Participation, presence, or mobility experience alone is not sufficient for the award of ECTS credits. Credits must be based on demonstrable and assessed learning.

Summary

ECTS credits provide a transparent, comparable and widely recognised framework for structuring and validating student learning across different higher education settings. In ERUA intensive and mobile learning formats, this means that credits are awarded not for the format itself, but for clearly defined and successfully assessed learning outcomes supported by an appropriate student workload.

For ERUA course design, three principles are therefore fundamental:

- learning outcomes must be explicit and achievable;
- workload must be clearly planned across all phases of the learning experience;
- assessment must verify what each student has achieved.

The following chapters build on this foundation by examining how workload can be understood in practice and how 3 ECTS credits may be integrated into specific ERUA innovative learning formats.

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2 Understanding and structuring student workload in intensive learning formats

2.1. Student workload and teacher workload

Within the ECTS framework, credits are calculated on the basis of **s**tudent workload alone. The relevant measure is the time students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes successfully.

Teacher workload remains essential to the quality and delivery of a course, including preparation, teaching, supervision, coordination, and assessment. However, it does not form part of the ECTS calculation itself and should be considered separately within institutional planning and support arrangements.

For the purposes of this document:

- student workload refers to the time required for students to complete the learning activities necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes successfully;
- teacher workload refers to the academic and organisational work required to design, deliver, support, and assess the course.

Although teacher workload is not counted towards ECTS, it can serve as an indirect indicator of the academic intensity and organisational complexity of an intensive learning activity.

2.2. Core categories of student workload

In ERUA intensive and mobile learning formats, student workload usually extends beyond classroom or contact time. It should be understood as a combination of different but connected categories of activity, each of which may legitimately contribute to ECTS credits.

a) Preparatory work (before the intensive phase)

Preparatory work takes place before the intensive phase and enables students to participate meaningfully in the learning process from the outset. It may include:

- reading academic texts or background materials;
- watching preparatory videos or lectures;
- responding to guiding questions or short written tasks;
- familiarising themselves with the topic, context, case, or methodology.

In intensive formats, preparatory work is essential in intensive formats, as it supports deeper engagement during a limited period of concentrated activity.

b) Contact and guided learning activities (during the intensive phase)

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These are structured learning activities carried out with direct academic guidance during the intensive phase. They may include:

- lectures and seminars;
- workshops,laboratories, or practical sessions;
- fieldwork, site visits, or case-based activities;
- supervised group work, tutorials, or consultations.

In travelling seminars, intensive schools, and mobile learning initiatives this category may also include structured academic observation, guided analysis, and place-based learning embedded in the mobility experience.

c) Independent and collaborative work

This category includes student work carried out individually or in groups, with limited or no direct supervision, such as:

- group project work;
- collaborative problem-solving;
- independent research or analysis;
- preparation of joint outputs or presentations.

In many innovative learning formats, this component represents a substantial share of the total workload and is central to the development of autonomy, teamwork, and applied learning.

d) Reflection and consolidation

Reflection is an important component of academic learning, particularly in short and intensive formats where students are expected to process and integrate a high volume of experience in a limited time. Reflection and consolidation may include:

- reflective journals or learning diaries;
- analytical texts connecting theory and practice;
- self-assessment and peer reflection;
- synthesis of key learning outcomes.

This dimension helps ensure that intensive participation is translated into demonstrable academic learning rather than remaining an isolated experience.

e) Assessment-related work

Assessment-related workload includes the time required for students to prepare and complete the tasks through which achievement is verified. This may include:

- preparing assignments, portfolios, or project outputs;
- preparing presentations or demonstrations;
- completing written, oral, or practice-based assessment tasks.

Assessment-related work is a legitimate and necessary part of student workload and must be taken into account when calculating the overall volume of learning.

2.3. Typical workload distribution for 3 ECTS

There is no single model for allocating the **75 to 90 hours** typically associated with **3 ECTS credits**. The precise distribution will depend on the course design, methodology, and intended learning outcomes. Nevertheless, in ERUA intensive and mobile formats, workload is often distributed across the learning process in the following way:

TABLE 1.

Phase	Type of work	Indicative Hours
Before the intensive phase	Preparatory work	10–20
During the intensive phase	Contact and guided learning activities	20–30
During and/or after the intensive phase	Independent and collaborative work	20–30
After the intensive phase	Reflection and assessment	15–20
Total		**75–90**

This distribution should be treated as indicative rather than prescriptive. Variations are entirely possible, provided that the overall workload remains realistic, coherent, and aligned with the learning outcomes and assessment design.

2.4. Avoiding common misunderstandings

When designing intensive and mobile learning formats, several recurrent misunderstandings should be avoided:

- Attendance does not equal workload. Presence in a lecture, workshop, or field activity does not in itself justify ECTS credits. Such participation must form part of a broader learning process connected to specific tasks, outcomes, and assessment.
- Mobility alone does not generate credits. Travel, accommodation, and logistics are not counted as academic workload unless they are clearly embedded within structured learning activities and contribute directly to the achievement of learning outcomes.
- Intensity does not replace structure. .

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- Overloading students is not a solution. Assigning an excessive number of tasks to justify credits can undermine both learning quality and student well-being. Workload planning should be realistic, proportionate, and transparent.

2.5. Documenting student workload

For ERUA learning activities to be transparent, credible, and recognisable across institutions, student workload must be clearly documented. This documentation should:

- describe the different categories of workload explicitly;
- show how the workload relates to the intended learning outcome;
- indicate how achievement will be assessed;
- be communicated clearly to students in advance.

Clear workload documentation supports several important objectives within the alliance. It strengthens internal quality assurance, facilitates recognition discussions across partner institutions, and helps students understand the expectations, scope, and academic value of the course.

Summary

Student workload is the cornerstone of ECTS credit allocation.In ERUA intensive and mobile learning formats, this workload should be identified, structured, and documented across the full learning process rather than being limited to contact hours alone.

Three points are especially important:

- workload includes preparation, guided learning, independent or collaborative work, reflection, and assessment;
- all phases of the intensive learning experience may legitimately contribute to credit allocation;
- innovative methodologies can provide effective and academically robust ways of organising a 3 ECTS learning experience.

The next chapter demonstrates how this workload logic is applied within specific ERUA innovative learning formats**,** showing how 3 ECTS credits can be systematically integrated into different methodologies.

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3 Awarding 3 ECTS withing ERUA innovative learning formats

3.1 Cooperative and collaborative learning and the awarding of 3 ECTS

3.1.1. Relevance for ERUA intensive learning formats

CCooperative and collaborative learning are among the most suitable methodological approaches for ERUA intensive courses, schools, and travelling seminars.. Their relevance is particularly strong in international and interdisciplinary settings, where learning depends not only on individual study but also on exchange, negotiation, shared problem-solving, and joint knowledge production.

Within ERUA, these approaches support several important educational aims at once: active student engagement, peer learning, shared responsibility, and the development of transversal competences such as communication, teamwork, and intercultural collaboration. Because they generate clearly identifiable forms of student activity before, during, and after the intensive phase, they also provide a credible and traceable basis for awarding 3 ECTS credits.

3.1.2 Types of student workload generated

In cooperative and collaborative formats, student workload emerges through the combination of individual preparation, guided interaction, collective task completion, and individual reflection. Typical workload components include:

- preparatory individual study;
- structured group work;
- guided collaborative tasks;
- individual reflection on the group processes and its outcomes.

This methodological model is especially compatible with the ECTS logic set out in the previous chapters because it makes visible both the collective and the individual dimensions of learning. Students contribute to shared outputs, but they also engage in identifiable learning processes that can be documented and assessed at individual level.

3.1.3 Structuring the workload for 3 ECTS

A cooperative or collaborative intensive course awarding **3 ECTS credits** would typically involve a total student workload of **75 to 90 hours**, distributed across the preparatory, intensive, and follow-up phases of the course. In practice, the structure may resemble the following model:

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TABLE 2.

Phase	Learning Activities	Indicative Hours
Before the intensive phase	Preparatory reading, introductory tasks, individual preparation	10–15
During the intensive phase	Collaborative workshops, group discussions, guided teamwork	25–30
During and/or after the intensive phase	Independent group work and coordination	20–25
After the intensive phase	Individual reflection, consolidation, assessment tasks	15–20
Total		**75–90 hours**

This distribution is indicative rather than fixed. Its purpose is to show that intensive contact time alone is rarely sufficient for 3 ECTS; the academic value of the format depends on being supported by meaningful preparation, structured collaboration, and follow-up work.

3.1.4 Typical learning outcomes

In cooperative and collaborative intensive formats awarding, learning outcomes should reflect both the academic content of the course and the collaborative processes through which that content is developed. Typical outcomes may include the ability to:

- engage effectively in cooperative and collaborative learning processes;
- contribute constructively to group-based problem-solving;
- integrate individual knowledge into a shared learning task;
- reflect critically on both subject matter and group dynamics.

For this reason, learning outcomes should explicitly address not only cognitive achievement, but also the social, communicative, and reflective dimensions of learning. This is particularly important in ERUA formats, where collaboration across disciplines, institutions, and cultural contexts is often part of the intended educational value.

3.1.5 Evidence of learning

Because learning takes place at both group and individual levels, evidence of learning should reflect this dual structure. Appropriate forms of evidence include:

- a group-based output (joint report, presentation, concept, or solution);

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- documentation of the collaborative process (work logs, task allocation, or process records);
- an individual reflective or analytical text that demonstrates what the student has learned through the collaborative activity.

This combination helps ensure that the collaborative methodology does not obscure individual achievement. It also strengthens the transparency of recognition and assessment, which is particularly important in alliance-based and cross-institutional learning settings.

3.1.6 Assessment principles

Assessment in cooperative and collaborative intensive courses should recognise both the shared nature of the task and the need to verify individual student achievement. It should therefore:

- combine evaluation of group output with evaluation of individual learning;
- make individual contribution visible and assessable;
- align clearly with the stated learning outcomes.

A typical assessment distribution may be:

- group output: 60–70%;
- individual reflection or analytical contribution: 30–40%.

This distribution is not mandatory, but it offers a useful model for maintaining both methodological coherence and fairness. Transparent assessment criteria are essential so that collaborative work is recognised appropriately without reducing accountability for individual learning.

3.1.7 Design considerations

When using cooperative and collaborative learning to award ECTS credits, several principles are particularly important:

- collaboration must be designed and guided, not left implicit;
- group work must be connected to explicit learning tasks;
- individual learning must be made visible through reflection or analysis.

When these conditions are met, cooperative and collaborative learning does not weaken academic rigour. On the contrary, it can deepen learning by combining knowledge acquisition with dialogue, application, negotiation, and critical reflection, while remaining fully compatible with ECTS requirements.

3.1.8 Summary

Cooperative and collaborative learning provides a robust methodological framework for awarding 3 ECTS credits in ERUA intensive learning formats. Properly designed, it combines realistic student workload, clear learning outcomes, visible evidence of achievement, and assessment methods that recognise both collective work and individual learning.

Its value for ERUA lies not only in its pedagogical effectiveness, but also in its suitability for transnational, interdisciplinary, and short-format learning environments in which collaboration is itself part of the educational objective.

3.2 Service Learning as a framework forwarding 3 ECTS

3.2.1 Relevance for ERUA intensive learning formats

Service Learning is an established innovative learning format within ERUA that combines academic learning with structured engagement in real-life social, cultural, or institutional contexts. In intensive courses, schools, and travelling seminars, it offers a particularly strong framework for linking theory, practice, and civic engagement within a clearly designed learning process.

Within the ECTS framework, the value of Service Learning lies in its ability to transform experiential activity into structured academic learning. The credit-bearing element is therefore not the experience alone, but the way in which that experience is prepared, analysed, reflected upon, and assessed.

3.2.2 Types of student workload involved

In Service Learning formats, student workload is typically generated through a combination of academic preparation, contextual engagement, observation, documentation, and reflection. Typical workload components include:

- preparatory academic study and contextual familiarisation;
- practical engagement in a real-world setting;
- observation, documentation, and data collection;
- systematic reflection and theoretical analysis.

A defining feature of Service Learning is that experience alone is not sufficient for the award of credit. Learning becomes academically meaningful when students interpret that experience through concepts, methods, and critical reflection. This makes the methodology fully compatible with the ECTS emphasis on learning outcomes, workload, and demonstrable achievement.

3.2.3 Indicative workload structure for 3 ECTS

A Service Learning intensive course awarding **3 ECTS credits** would normally involve a total student workload of **75 to 90 hours**, distributed across preparatory, practical, analytical, and reflective phases. An indicative model is set out below:

TABLE 3.

Phase	Learning Activities	Indicative Hours
Before the activity	Theoretical framework, contextual preparation	10–15
During the activity	Practical engagement / fieldwork	20–25
During and/or after the intensive phase	Documentation and analytical work	20–25
After the activity	Reflection, consolidation, and assessment	15–20
Total		**75–90 hours**

As in the previous section, this distribution should be understood as indicative rather than prescriptive. Its main purpose is to demonstrate that practical engagement alone does not normally account for the full workload required for 3 ECTS. The academic coherence of the format depends on preparation, documentation, analysis, and follow-up assessment.

3.2.4 Typical learning outcomes

In Service Learning intensive formats, learning outcomes should make explicit the connection between academic knowledge and real-world engagement. They commonly include the ability to:

- analyse a societal issue within a real-world context;
- connect academic theory with practical experience;
- demonstrate ethical awareness and civic responsibility;
- articulate a structured and critical reflection on experience.

These outcomes are particularly relevant in ERUA contexts that aim to foster socially engaged, reflective, and interdisciplinary learning. They also help ensure that the educational purpose of the activity remains explicit and assessable.

3.2.5 Evidence of learning

To support the award of ECTS credits, Service Learning should generate evidence that makes the student's academic learning visible. Appropriate evidence of learning may include:

- a reflective learning diary or portfolio;
- an analytical report linking theory and practice;
- a structured presentation of findings and reflections.

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3.2.6 Assessment Principles

Assessment in Service Learning formats should focus on the academic achievement generated through the experience rather than on participation alone. In practice, assessment should address:

- achievement of learning outcomes;
- depth and quality of reflection;
- analytical integration of experience and theory.

As elsewhere in this document, participation on its own does not justify the award of ECTS credits. The assessment design must make it possible to verify that the student has transformed practical engagement into demonstrable learning.

3.2.7 Design considerations

When Service Learning is used as the basis for awarding ECTS credits, several design principles are especially important:

- the service or engagement activity should be embedded in a clear academic framework;
- students should be given structured opportunities to document, analyse, and interpret their experience;
- reflection should be treated as an academic task, not as an optional add-on;
- assessment should verify learning, not simply acknowledge participation.

When these conditions are met, Service Learning offers a robust methodology for combining socially grounded experience with academic rigour in a way that is fully compatible with ECTS requirements.

3.2.8 Summary

Service Learning offers a strong methodological framework for awarding 3 ECTS credits in ERUA intensive learning formats. Properly designed, it embeds practical engagement within a structured academic sequence that includes preparation, observation, documentation, analysis, reflection, and assessment.

Its value for ERUA lies in its capacity to connect real-world contexts with academically assessable learning, while supporting civic, ethical, and reflective dimensions of student development.

3.3 Project-Based Learning and the Awarding of 3 ECTS

3.3.1 Relevance for ERUA intensive learning formats

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is one of the methodologies most readily aligned with ERUA intensive learning formats because it organises learning around the investigation of a defined

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problem and the production of a concrete output. It is particularly suitable for intensive courses and schools that aim to foster interdisciplinary problem-solving, teamwork, and applied learning within a limited period of concentrated activity.

3.3.2 Types of student workload involved

In Project-Based Learning formats, student workload is typically generated through a combination of conceptual, practical, and collaborative tasks. Typical workload components include:

- problem formulation and background research;
- project planning and coordination;
- collaborative and individual development work;
- synthesis, presentation, and review of results.

3.3.3 Indicative workload structure for 3 ECTS

TABLE 4.

Phase	Learning Activities	Indicative Hours
Before the intensive phase	Introduction, problem definition, preparatory study	10–15
During the intensive phase	Workshops, supervised project work	25–30
During and/or after the intensive phase	Independent project development	20–25
After the intensive phase	Finalisation, reflection, and assessment	15–20
Total		**75–90 hours**

As in the previous sections, this distribution should be treated as indicative. Its function is to show that the project output is only one part of the overall learning process; the full 3 ECTS depends on a coherent sequence of preparation, guided work, independent development, and assessment.

3.3.4 Typical learning outcomes

In Project-Based Learning intensive formats, learning outcomes should combine analytical, applied, and collaborative dimensions. Students are typically expected to be able to:

- analyse and address a complex problem;
- apply theoretical knowledge in a project context;
- work effectively in a team;

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- present coherent and well-argued results.

These outcomes are especially relevant in ERUA settings that seek to combine interdisciplinarity, innovation, and practical application. They also provide a clear bridge between academic content and demonstrable outputs.

3.3.5 Evidence of learning

To support the award of ECTS credits, Project-Based Learning should generate evidence that captures both the final result and the learning process that led to it. Appropriate forms of evidence may include:

- a project output (report, concept, prototype, policy proposal);
- documentation of the project process;
- an individual reflective or analytical contribution.

3.3.6 Assessment principles

Assessment in Project-Based Learning formats should recognise both the quality of the shared project and the contribution of the individual student. A common approach is to combine:

- group project outcomes (60–70%);
- individual contribution and reflection (30–40%).

This balance is not obligatory, but it offers a useful model for ensuring fairness, accountability, and alignment with the intended learning outcomes. As in other ERUA innovative formats, assessment should verify learning rather than simply reward participation.

3.3.7 Design Considerations

When Project-Based Learning is used as the basis for awarding ECTS credits, several design principles are particularly important:

- the project should be academically framed through a clear problem, question, or challenge;
- the stages of the project should be explicit and linked to student tasks;
- the final product should be supported by evidence of process and individual learning;
- assessment should value both the quality of the output and the learning demonstrated through its development.

When these conditions are met, Project-Based Learning offers a robust methodological framework for awarding **3 ECTS credits** in intensive ERUA formats, with a clear alignment between workload, learning outcomes, evidence, and assessment.

3.3.8 Summary

Project-Based Learning provides a strong basis for awarding **3 ECTS credits** in ERUA intensive learning formats because it organises learning around structured inquiry, collaborative development, and a clearly assessable outcome. Properly designed, it makes student workload visible, supports applied and interdisciplinary learning, and allows academic achievement to be assessed transparently.

3.4 Gamification as a framework for awarding of 3 ECTS

3.4.1 Relevance for ERUA intensive learning formats

Gamification introduces game-based elements into course design in order to increase engagement, motivation, active participation, and structured progression through learning tasks. Within ERUA intensive learning formats, it is particularly useful where academic work can be organised as a sequence of challenges, missions, or problem-solving stages.

3.4.2 Types of student workload involved

In gamified learning formats, student workload is typically generated through a combination of preparation, active participation, strategic problem-solving, and reflective follow-up. Typical workload components include:

- preparation and familiarisation with rules, objectives, and content;
- active participation in structured learning challenges;
- problem-solving under defined constraints;
- reflection on learning processes and outcomes.

This means that gamification can support ECTS allocation only when the game structure is clearly linked to academic tasks and intended learning outcomes. The methodology does not reduce the need for rigour; rather, it reorganises how students engage with demanding learning processes.

3.4.3 Indicative workload structure for 3 ECTS

A gamified intensive course awarding 3 ECTS credits would normally involve a total student workload of 75 to 90 hours, distributed across preparatory, challenge-based, independent, and reflective phases. An indicative model is as follows:

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TABLE 5.

Phase	Learning Activities	Indicative Hours
Before the intensive phase	Introduction to content and game logic	10–15
During the intensive phase	Participation in structured challenges	25–30
During and/or after the intensive phase	Independent or group task completion	20–25
After the intensive phase	Reflection and assessment activities	15–20
Total		**75–90 hours**

This distribution highlights an important point: gamification is compatible with 3 ECTS only when the challenge-based activities are embedded within a broader structure of preparation, follow-up, and assessment. The game format may shape the experience, but it does not replace the academic workload required for credit allocation.

3.4.4 Typical learning outcomes

In gamified intensive formats, learning outcomes should focus on what students are able to do academically through the challenge-based structure. They may include the ability to:

- apply knowledge in problem-solving scenarios;
- adapt strategies within rule-based environments;
- collaborate and compete constructively;
- reflect critically on learning strategies and outcomes.

These outcomes are especially relevant where ERUA courses seek to promote active learning, experimentation, teamwork, and strategic thinking in interdisciplinary or creative settings.

3.4.5 Evidence of Learning

To support the award of ECTS credits, gamified learning should generate evidence that demonstrates what students have achieved through the structured challenges. Appropriate forms of evidence may include:

- completed challenges or missions;
- learning logs or reflective texts;
- analytical summaries of strategies and results.

This evidence is important because it makes clear that the academic value of the format lies not in participation in a game as such, but in the documented learning produced through the game-based design.

3.4.6 Assessment principles

Assessment in gamified format should prioritise:

- achievement of learning outcomes;
- quality of reflection and analysis;
- coherence between game-based activities and academic objectives.

Gamification does not replace academic rigor; it restructures it. For that reason, assessment should focus on the knowledge, skills, and reflective capacities demonstrated through the activities, rather than on game participation alone.

3.4.7 Design Considerations

When gamification is used as the basis for awarding ECTS credits, several design principles are particularly important:

- the game structure should serve clear academic purposes rather than functioning as an isolated motivational layer;
- each challenge or mission should be linked to identifiable learning tasks and outcomes;
- students should produce evidence that allows learning to be documented and assessed;
- reflection should be included so that the experience is converted into explicit academic learning.

When these conditions are met, gamification offers an engaging but academically credible framework for awarding 3 ECTS credits in ERUA intensive learning formats.

3.4.8 Summary

Gamification can provide a transparent and effective framework for awarding **3 ECTS credits** in ERUA intensive learning formats when it is embedded within a clear academic design. When properly designed, it combines preparation, challenge-based participation, task completion, reflection, and assessment in a way that supports both student engagement and ECTS-compatible credit allocation.

3.5. Flipped Classroom as a framework for awarding 3 ECTS

3.5.1 Relevance for ERUA intensive learning formats

The Flipped Classroom model is particularly well suited to ERUA intensive learning formats because it redistributes learning across distinct phases. Content acquisition is moved largely to the preparatory stage, while contact time is reserved for discussion, application, exchange, and problem-solving. This makes the model especially valuable in intensive courses where

face-to-face time is limited and needs to be used in a purposeful and academically demanding way.

Within the ECTS framework, the Flipped Classroom offers a strong basis for awarding 3 ECTS credits because it makes visible a substantial volume of student workload outside contact hours. It therefore aligns well with the principle that credits reflect the total workload required to achieve learning outcomes, rather than classroom time alone.

3.5.2 Types of student workload involved

In a flipped intensive format, student workload is generated through a combination of preparation, active participation, and follow-up learning. Typical workload components include:

- pre-class study of learning materials;
- active participation in in-class activities;
- independent consolidation and reflection.

This distribution is particularly important in intensive settings because it allows core concepts to be introduced before the contact phase, freeing the on-site or synchronous component for deeper forms of engagement. It also makes clear that the academic value of the format depends on the full learning sequence rather than on attendance at the intensive phase alone.

3.5.3 Indicative workload structure for 3 ECTS

A Flipped Classroom intensive course awarding 3 ECTS credits would normally involve a total student workload of 75 to 90 hours, distributed across preparatory, interactive, and follow-up phases. An indicative model is as follows:

TABLE 6.

Phase	Learning Activities	Indicative Hours
Before the intensive phase	Study of videos, texts, preparatory tasks	20–25
During the intensive phase	Discussion, application, problem-solving	20–25
After the intensive phase	Consolidation, reflection, and assessment	30–35
Total		**75–90 hours**

This model highlights an important feature of the flipped approach: a substantial proportion of the workload is intentionally located before and after the contact phase. That redistribution does not reduce academic expectations; it allows intensive teaching time to be used more effectively while preserving the depth required for 3 ECTS.

3.5.4 Typical learning outcomes

In Flipped Classroom intensive formats, learning outcomes should reflect both conceptual understanding and active application. Students are typically expected to be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of key concepts;
- apply knowledge in analytical or practical contexts;
- engage actively in discussion and peer learning;
- reflect critically on their learning process.

These outcomes are especially relevant in ERUA contexts that seek to combine preparation, interaction, and student-centred learning within short but academically substantial formats.

3.5.5 Evidence of learning

To support the award of ECTS credits, the Flipped Classroom model should generate evidence across the different phases of learning. Appropriate forms of evidence may include:

- preparatory assignments;
- participation in applied learning activities;
- analytical or reflective written work.

This range of evidence is useful because it captures the logic of the methodology itself: students first prepare, then engage actively, and finally consolidate their learning through reflection or analysis. In ECTS terms, this helps make the student workload visible and the learning outcomes assessable.

3.5.6 Assessment principles

Assessment in Flipped Classroom formats should be designed to reflect the full learning sequence. In particular, it should:

- align with preparatory and applied learning tasks;
- verify individual achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- recognise the importance of preparation and active engagement.

As in the other methodologies discussed in this chapter, participation alone is not sufficient for the award of ECTS credits. Assessment should confirm that students have not only engaged with the activities, but have also demonstrated the expected understanding, application, and reflection.

3.5.7 Design Considerations

When the Flipped Classroom model is used as the basis for awarding ECTS credits, several design principles are particularly important:

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- preparatory materials should be academically meaningful and clearly connected to later activities;
- contact time should be reserved for higher-order learning tasks such as discussion, analysis, and application;
- follow-up work should consolidate learning and provide evidence of achievement;
- assessment should recognise the coherence of the full sequence rather than focusing only on the intensive phase.

When these conditions are met, the Flipped Classroom provides a credible and academically robust framework for awarding 3 ECTS credits in ERUA intensive learning formats.

3.5.8 Summary

The Flipped Classroom model provides a strong methodological basis for awarding **3 ECTS credits** in ERUA intensive learning formats because it redistributes workload in a clear and purposeful way across preparation, active contact time, and follow-up learning. Properly designed, it allows intensive courses to maintain academic depth while making full use of the ECTS logic of workload, learning outcomes, evidence, and assessment.

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4 Applied models for designing and justifying 3 ECTS in ERUA intensive learning formats

4.1 Intensive Courses Using Different ERUA Methodologies: Two Applied Models for 3 ECTS

This section illustrates how existing ERUA intensive courses, designed through different innovative methodologies, can be structured and justified as **3 ECTS** learning activities in line with the principles set out in the previous chapters. The purpose of these examples is not to prescribe a single model, but to show how different pedagogical designs can produce a coherent relationship between workload, learning outcomes, evidence of learning, and assessment.

The example is based on two real courses implemented within ERUA:

- an artistic and digitally oriented intensive workshop;
- an archaeology-based travelling intensive course.

4.1.1 Example A. Cooperative, collaborative and gamified intensive course

Archetypes and Algorithms. Exploring Tarot through AI Art

a) Methodological framework

This course combines several methodological approaches already discussed in Chapter 3:

- Cooperative and collaborative learning
- Gamification
- Creative practice-based learning

The course is structured as a 3-day on-site intensive workshop in which students engage in symbolic analysis, group discussion, and AI-based creative production. As an ERUA example, it shows that an innovative and artistically oriented format can support credit-bearing learning when creative activity is embedded within a structured academic design.

b) Learning outcomes

Students completing the course are expected to be able to:

- analyse symbolic and visual systems (Tarot archetypes);
- translate abstract concepts into visual and digital outputs;
- work collaboratively in creative and interpretative tasks;
- reflect critically on human–AI interaction and meaning-making.

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These outcomes are appropriate for a 3 ECTS intensive format because they combine conceptual understanding, applied production, collaboration, and reflection. In other words, they make clear that the course is not centered only on creative experimentation, but on academically assessable learning.

c) Indicative student workload structure (3 ECTS)

The course can be justified as a 3 ECTS activity through the following workload structure:

TABLE 7.

Phase	Learning Activities	Hours
Before the intensive phase	Preparatory reading on Tarot symbolism and visual culture; familiarisation with AI tools	15
During the intensive phase	Lectures, tarot sessions, AI generation labs, guided group discussions (3 full days)	30
Independent and collaborative work	Creation of 1–3 AI-generated visuals; group preparation for final reading/presentation	20
Reflection and assessment	Individual written reflection (1 page); final group presentation	15
Total		80 hours → 3 ECTS

This model is useful because it demonstrates clearly that the credit allocation is not based on the three on-site days alone. The intensive phase is supported by preparatory work, independent and collaborative production, and reflective assessment, together amounting to a realistic student workload within the 75 to 90 hour range associated with 3 ECTS.

d) Evidence of learning

The course generates several forms of evidence that make learning visible and assessable, including:

- AI-generated visual artefacts (individual and group-based);
- final group presentation or symbolic “AI Tarot reading”;
- individual reflective text analysing process and meaning.

This combination is particularly important because it captures both the creative and the analytical dimensions of the learning process. It also helps ensure that innovative or gamified elements are translated into evidence that can support transparent credit allocation.

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e) Assessment logic

Assessment in this model should focus on:

- creative outputs and participation in collaborative processes;
- quality of reflection and symbolic interpretation;
- coherence between concept, process, and outcome.

The key methodological point is that gamification and creative practice do not replace academic learning. Rather, they structure workload, increase engagement, and create conditions in which learning outcomes can be demonstrated and assessed. This is precisely what makes the format compatible with the award of ECTS credits**.**

f) Why This Example Supports 3 ECTS

From an ERUA design perspective, this example is valuable because it shows that a highly creative and digitally mediated intensive course can still meet the requirements for credit-bearing learning. What legitimises the award of 3 ECTS is not the novelty of the format, but the coherence between:

- clearly articulated learning outcomes;
- a realistic and documented workload;
- identifiable evidence of learning;
- assessment linked to individual and collaborative achievement.

4.1.2 Example B. Service Learning, field-based and collaborative intensive course

Artefact biographies and the interpretation of archaeological finds

a) Methodological Framework

This course combines several methodological approaches that are particularly well suited to ERUA intensive and mobile learning formats:

- Service Learning
- Field-based and travelling seminar learning
- Cooperative and collaborative learning

The course combines online preparation**,** on-site intensive teaching**,** museum and site visits, and final reflective discussion. As a model for 3 ECTS, it is especially useful because it shows

how mobility-based and place-based learning can be embedded within a clearly structured academic process.

b) Learning outcomes

Students completing the course are expected to able to:

- analyse archaeological artefacts as objects with changing meanings;
- apply theoretical concepts to real museum and site contexts;
- work collaboratively in interdisciplinary learning environments;
- articulate interpretations through oral academic presentation.

These outcomes are appropriate for a 3 ECTS intensive format because they combine disciplinary understanding, contextual application, collaboration, and communication. They also make clear that the course is not centred simply on visiting sites, but on producing academically grounded interpretation through guided engagement with material evidence.

c) Indicative student workload structure (3 ECTS)

The course can be justified as a 3 ECTS activity through the following workload structure:

TABLE 8.

Phase	Learning Activities	Hours
Before the intensive phase	Introductory online meeting; preparatory study of artefact biography concepts	15
During the intensive phase	Lectures, seminars, museum and site visits in Sofia and Plovdiv (6 days incl. travel)	35
Independent and collaborative work	Preparation of oral presentation; synthesis of case studies	15
Reflection and assessment	Final online discussion and oral presentation	10
Total		75 hours → 3 ECTS

This model is important because it demonstrates that the credit allocation is not based on mobility alone. The six-day travelling phase is academically supported by prior conceptual preparation, structured synthesis work, and reflective assessment, resulting in a coherent workload within the range expected for 3 ECTS.

d) Evidence of learning

The course produces several forms of evidence that make student learning visible, including:

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- oral presentation on a selected artefact or topic;
- demonstrated ability to connect theory and material evidence;
- active participation in discussions and site-based analysis.

This evidence is particularly relevant in a field-based format because it shows that students are not only observing sites and collections, but are also interpreting them through academic concepts and collaborative discussion.

e) Assessment logic

Assessment in this model should focus on:

- quality of interpretation and argumentation;
- integration of theoretical and empirical perspectives;
- clarity and coherence of oral presentation.

The key methodological point is that mobility and site visits generate ECTS only when embedded in structured academic tasks and reflection. In this sense, the educational value of the course lies not in travel as such, but in the way field experience is transformed into documented and assessable learning.

f) Why This Example Supports 3 ECTS

From an ERUA design perspective, this example is valuable because it shows that a travelling, field-based intensive course can fully meet the requirements for credit-bearing learning. What supports the award of **3 ECTS** is the coherence between:

- defined learning outcomes;
- a realistic and documented workload;
- identifiable evidence of learning;
- assessment that verifies interpretation, application, and reflection.

4.1.3 Comparative remarks

These two examples show that very different intensive learning formats can legitimately support the award of 3 ECTS credits. One is artistic, digitally mediated, and partly gamified; the other is archaeology-based, mobile, and field-oriented. Yet both can be justified within the same ECTS logic.

The decisive factor is therefore not the topic, the disciplinary field, or the surface format of the course. What matters is whether the design demonstrates:

- structured student workload;

- clear learning outcomes;
- appropriate evidence and assessment.

These examples also confirm a broader point relevant to ERUA: innovative methodologies do not weaken the academic basis for credit allocation. On the contrary, when they are properly designed, they provide robust frameworks for credit-bearing learning across different kinds of intensive and mobile educational activity.

4.1.4 Transferability

The models presented above should not be read as fixed templates, but as transferable design references. They may be adapted across:

- other disciplines;
- shorter or longer intensive formats;
- combined methodological approaches, such as Flipped Classroom with Service Learning, or collaborative learning with project-based design.

What must remain constant is the coherence of the course design. Whatever the discipline or format, the relationship between workload, learning outcomes, evidence of learning, and assessment must remain explicit and credible. This is what makes an intensive course recognisable as a **3 ECTS** learning activity rather than simply a short academic event.

4.2 Design checklist: Embedding 3 ECTS into the description of an ERUA intensive course.

The following checklist provides a practical guide for designing or reviewing ERUA intensive courses intended to award **3 ECTS credits**. It summarises the principles discussed throughout this document and translates them into a sequence of design steps that can be used when preparing a course description or proposal.

The checklist does not impose a fixed template. Rather, it helps ensure that the key elements required for ECTS allocation, learning outcomes, student workload, evidence of learning, and assessment, are coherently integrated into the course design.

STEP 1. Start from learning, not from format

☐ Clearly state what students are expected to learn, not only what activities they will attend or experience.
☐ Formulate 3 to 5 learning outcomes that can realistically be achieved in an intensive format.
☐ Ensure learning outcomes refer to knowledge, skills, and/or competences, rather than participation.

Design tip: If a learning outcome cannot be assessed, it cannot generate ECTS.

STEP 2. Identify the methodological framework

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☐ Explicitly indicate which ERUA innovative learning methodology or methodologies format(s) structure the course (e.g. Cooperative & collaborative learning, Service Learning, PBL, Gamification, Flipped Classroom).
☐ Describe how students will learn within this methodology, rather than simply naming it (not just what the methodology is).

Design tip: The methodology provides the structure through which student workload is generated and organised.

STEP 3. Design the learning phases (before / during / after)

☐ Design mandatory preparatory activities (before the intensive phase).
☐ Design structured learning activities during the intensive phase.
☐ Design mandatory follow-up activities after the intensive phase that consolidate learning and support assessment.

Design tip: A course that exists only during the on-site phase rarely reaches the workload required for 3 ECTS.

STEP 4. Define concrete student tasks to each phase

For each phase, explicitly describe what students **are expected to** do**:**

☐ Before the intensive phase: reading, viewing materials, short written tasks, preparatory exercises.
☐ During the intensive phase: workshops, collaborative tasks, fieldwork, laboratories, guided discussions.
☐ After the intensive phase: reflection, project completion, presentations, analytical tasks.

Design tip: Tasks create workload; descriptions alone do not.

STEP 5. Translate tasks into student workload (ECTS logic)

☐ Assign approximate hours to the main groups of student tasks.
☐ Ensure that the total student workload corresponds to 75–90 hours (3 ECTS).
☐ Make workload implicit but understandable in the course description.

Design tip: The detailed calculation does not always need to be visible to students, but it should exist in the course design.

STEP 6. Design evidence of learning (What students submit or perform)

☐ Define **w**hat students must submit, present, or demonstrate**.**
☐ Ensure evidence reflects individual learning, even when activities are group-based..
☐ Align the evidence clearly with the intended learning outcomes.

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Design tip: Without a learning artefact or demonstrable output, there is no verifiable learning and therefore no basis for awarding ECTS.

No artefact → no proof of learning → no ECTS.

STEP 7. Integrate assessment into the course description

☐ Describe how learning will be assessed (focusing on form and criteria rather than administrative detail).
☐ Indicate whether assessment is individual, group-based, or a combination of both.
☐ Make clear that credits are awarded only after successful completion of the assessment requirements.

Design tip: Assessment legitimises the credits; it should be transparent, but not unnecessarily complex.

STEP 8. Make the ECTS opportunity explicit to students

☐ Clearly state that the course awards 3 ECTS credits.
☐ Indicate the conditions for earning the credits (e.g. participation + submission of assignments + reflection tasks).
☐ Avoid ambiguous wording (“active participation may lead to credits”).

Design tip: Students should understand clearly *how* credits are earned, not guess.

STEP 9. Final coherence check

☐ Learning outcomes, tasks, workload, evidence, and assessment form a clear and consistent sequence

Learning outcomes → tasks → workload → evidence → assessment form a clear chain.
☐ The intensive format restructures time, but does not reduce academic expectations.
☐ The course description implicitly reflects 75–90 hours of structured learning**.**

Final design question

Before finalising the course description, ask yourself:

If a student reads the course description, is it clear where, how, and through what work the 3 ECTS are earned?

If the answer is “yes”, the course has been designed as a credit-bearing learning activity rather than simply described as an academic event.

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