

Overview of the LINC Programme

Credits Structure

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Contents

Purpose of this document.....	3
About the LINC Programme.....	3
Overview of LINC Modules	4
Higher Education Award using ECTS Credits	5
Comparison of ECTS and FET Credits	5
Conclusion	7

Purpose of this document

This document has been composed in order to assist, in particular, LINC Graduates who wish to pursue further study. Many institutions have experience in managing their recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes in order to facilitate access to Level 5 or 6 further education award holders in terms of entry for further study at levels 7 or above. However, as the LINC Programme is a relatively new programme (First Graduation Ceremony in October 2017), there is not a widespread understanding of the credit structure of this higher-education programme and this document is aimed at ensuring all involved in the process of RPL understand the nature of the LINC Programme Special Purpose Award at Level 6 and the credits awarded for each of the modules.

In particular, the LINC Team has had a number of requests from Graduates to confirm the nature of the ECTS credits and the modules they have completed. Where we have issued a clarification letter confirming the nature of the credits and award, our understanding is that the relevant institution has accepted LINC as meeting or exceeding their requirements, where they normally require a major Level 6 Award (Further Education). As a result, this standard document is being published so that all students / graduates and institutions can have access to the same information.

About the LINC Programme

The Leadership for INclusion in the Early Years programme, LINC, is a Level 6 Special Purpose Award (Higher Education), to enable early years educators to perform the role of Inclusion Coordinator within Early Years' Services. The development of the programme is part of an Irish governmental response to local, national and international demands for high quality education and training leading towards graduate pathways in the combined field of early childhood care and education (ECCE). The programme seeks to address the need for continuing professional development (CPD) in relation to the inclusion of children with additional needs. LINC is part of a national Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) which is targeted at ensuring the inclusion of children with additional needs in the early years. Further information on AIM is available at <http://aim.gov.ie/>.

The LINC Programme is a one-year part-time blended learning programme, with 80% delivered online. The classroom-based learning component of the programme takes place in 9-10 centres across Ireland each year. The students undertaking the programme are all full-time early childhood teachers, and on graduation from LINC will become their service's

INclusion COordinator (INCO). Funded by DCYA, and offered free to students, the programme recruits approximately 900-1000 students annually, and aims to reach 80% of all early years' services in Ireland over the period of 2016-2020.

In 2018, the LINC Programme was recognised by the DCYA ¹as meeting both the minimum and room leader qualification requirements, meaning that LINC Graduates can now undertake the role of Room Leader, in addition to the INclusion COordinator (INCO) role.

Further information on the programme, including learning outcomes and module descriptors is available at: <http://lincprogramme.ie/>

Overview of LINC Modules

Table 1. Tabulated Summary of LINC Programme			
Module Title	ECTS Credits	Mode of Delivery	Semester
Inclusion in Early Years Settings: Concepts and Strategies	12	Face-to-face; On-line.	Autumn
Child Development	6	Face-to-face; On-line.	Autumn
Promoting Collaborative Practice for Inclusion in Early Childhood Care and Education	12	Face-to-face; On-line.	Spring
Curriculum for Inclusion	6	Face-to-face; On-line.	Spring
Leadership for Inclusion	12	Face-to-face; On-line.	Summer
Portfolio	12	Face-to-face; On-line.	Summer

*Full Module Outlines are available on lincprogramme.ie

¹ See full list of recognised qualifications available at:
<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Fchildcare%2Fqualifications.htm>

Higher Education Award using ECTS Credits

There are two credit systems in use across Further Education and Higher Education. Further Education & Training (FET) credits, are utilised for further education programmes awarded directly by QQI (up to level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications)². European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits are utilized for higher education programmes awarded by recognized third level institutions (e.g. Universities and Institutes of Technologies) (from level 6 to Level 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications).³

As can be seen, at Level 6, both FET and ECTS credits are used, dependent on the awarding body. The National Framework of Qualifications state that Higher Certificate (NFQ level 6) are awarded by: Institutes of Technology, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, and some Universities.⁴

The LINC Programme is a higher-education programme, awarded by the University of Limerick, and, therefore, the credits on this award are ECTS and not FET Credits.

Comparison of ECTS and FET Credits

Each ECTS Credit is weighted at a notional student workload of 25-30 hours⁵.

Each multiple of 5 FET Credits is weighted at a notional student workload of 50 hours⁶, indicating that each FET credit is approximately a student workload of 10 hours.

As an example, a typical Level 6 FET (e.g. ECCE) major award would require a student to complete 120 credits in total. As each credit has a notional workload of 10 hours, the total award would accumulate to approximately 1200 student work hours. A typical FET module would be 12 credits, or 120 hours.

² Discussed in depth at:

<https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/CAS%20restatement%20of%20policy%20and%20guidelines%20FET.pdf>

³ Discussed in detail as part of the Bologna Process at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en

⁴ From: <http://www.nfq-qqi.com/index.html> (Higher Certificate Option)

⁵ ECTS workload, (Heading Workload) page 10: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/ects-users-guide_en.pdf

⁶ FET workload, (Heading 7. FET Credit), page 5 of:

https://www.qqi.ie/sites/docs/AwardsLibraryPdf/6M2007_AwardSpecifications_English.pdf

In order to graduate from the LINC programme, students completed 60 ECTS. Given that each credit has a notional workload of 25-30 hours, the total award would accumulate to approximately 1500 – 1800 student work hours. A typical LINC module of 6 credits would require a workload of approximately 150-180 hours, and a typical LINC module of 12 credits would require a workload of approximately 300-360 hours.

Table 2, below, outlines the modules, credits and workload for each of the LINC Modules. It also translates the workload into an FET Credit equivalence using the standard set out above (i.e. 1 FET = 10 hours and 1 ECTS=25-30 hours).

Table 2. Module, Credits and Student Workload Summary for LINC			
Module Title	ECTS Credits	Student Workload	FET Credit Equivalence Based on Workload Hours
Inclusion in Early Years Settings: Concepts and Strategies	12	300-360 hours	30 – 36
Child Development	6	150-180 hours	15 – 18
Promoting Collaborative Practice for Inclusion in Early Childhood Care and Education	12	300-360 hours	30 – 36
Curriculum for Inclusion	6	150-180 hours	15 – 18
Leadership for Inclusion	12	300-360 hours	30 – 36
Portfolio	12	300-360 hours	30 – 36
Total	60	1500-1800 hours	150 – 180

In general, a major Level 6 Award (Further Education) is 120 FET credits (1200 student workload hours). As can be seen above, the student effort involved in the LINC Programme is in excess of this. While the LINC Programme is a Special Purpose Award at Level 6, comprising of 60 ECTS credits, it should be recognised the student effort and learning that takes place during the modules and programme is in excess of any Major Award for any Further Education Programme at Level 6.

Conclusion

This document outlines the differences between FET and ECTS credits used at further education and higher education respectively. Generally, there is no overlap between these credit systems, except at Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications, where both QQI and Higher Education Institutes may award certificates. In order to assist with LINC Graduates who may wish to pursue programmes at Level 7 or above, and wish to use the LINC Programme in order to meet entry criteria, the above tables will assist Admissions personnel or Course Leaders to determine the equivalence of the ECTS credits when comparing them to other Level 6 Awards.

Further information can be requested by Graduates or by Institutions on the LINC Programme website (www.lincprogramme.ie) or by emailing: linc@mic.ul.ie.