

## **NEWSLETTER 3 – LEVEL 5 IN THE PICTURE**

**information, article, calls. documents, research, reports...**

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### **1 - One**

#### **Level 5: a non-European narrative (and a request for help)**

**Key-words: Myanmar, Level 5, England, progression, collaboration, questions**

**Helen Corkill, England**

#### **Introduction**

This article poses some questions concerning Level 5 and its progression routes, and includes a request for help from colleagues.

Any attempt to describe and compare different national education and awards systems remains complex. Defining different types of Level 5 activity is a prime example of this.

This story involves the UK. In education, there is confusingly no such thing as the “United” Kingdom as each of the four home nations – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - has its differences from primary schooling onwards. So the national reference point in this paper is “England”, but the EQF is used to describe levels and ECTS used for credit values.

However, the central subject of this story lies not in England itself, but much further afield...

#### **Myanmar**

Myanmar has been constantly in the news since the beginning of February 2021. Yet despite the troubles and challenges, there remains a private higher education sector eager to enhance quality of provision, and to work and grow with international partners.

The national education system in Myanmar is based on the UK system, a legacy of British colonial rule. Compulsory schooling starts at age five, and finishes after twelve years of education around the age of 16, with pupils taking either the National Matriculation Examination, iGCSE, or O Levels (EQF Level 3). Children are taught in both Burmese and English from the kindergarten stage.

The National Matriculation Examination is in English and functions as the competitive entrance examination from state-run schools for admission into state-run universities. There is also a growing private school sector, mainly of UK and US schools. Many students educated in this system study at universities internationally or within the growing market for the more affordable option of studying for a British or American higher education award in-country, perhaps transferring abroad for study at Levels 6 or 7.

STI Myanmar University (STIMU) is a top-ranked, private higher education institution with campuses in the large cities of Yangon and Mandalay. The University’s specialisms include Engineering, Business and Management, Computing and Public Health. STIMU is notably innovative, enterprising and outward-facing. Internationalisation is highly prized, and STIMU has an active network

of international partners and collaborations, many in south-east Asia. A collaborative partnership was formed with the University of Bedfordshire, UK, in 2016 and STIMU now delivers many programmes with the University including Bachelor and Masters degrees, including MBAs. The collaboration includes Level 6 “top-up” degrees, designed to provide one-year programmes for students who have achieved a Level 5 award to complete a Bachelor degree. Historically, most STIMU students have remained to complete Level 6, with a few opting to complete their studies abroad, typically in the UK, USA, Singapore or Malaysia.



Many higher education programmes at STIMU, as elsewhere in Myanmar, are structured around a short-cycle award at Level 5 comprising a Diploma (first year Level 5, 60 ECTS) and Advanced Diploma (second year Level 5, 60 ECTS). These are developed and awarded by STIMU. The Advanced Diploma is followed by a one-year “top-up” award (60 ECTS) to bachelor degree<sup>1</sup>, delivered in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. For the purposes of credit transfer or the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) to UK Level 6 awards, students completing Diploma and Advanced Diploma stages at STIMU are regarded as having achieved 120 ECTS or 66% of an English bachelor degree. To facilitate parity of achievement internationally, STIMU Level 5 awards are currently undergoing the final stages for recognition and evaluation with UK ENIC-ECCTIS<sup>2</sup>, the UK national agency for international qualifications and skills.

However, there are disconnects in the Myanmar system where schooling finishes at 16+, yet state-run universities start at 17+ and entry is highly competitive and selective. For a number of years, STIMU has offered a number of foundation courses (EQF Level 4) preparatory to its UK-based higher education programmes. In 2020 the STIMU School Academy was opened, creating a centre for 16-18 year olds to consolidate Level 3 study through a vocational approach, and to offer an alternative progression route into higher or vocational education. Awards are designed and developed at STIMU, and accredited by NCFE, a UK awarding organisation. This vocational and widening-participation approach is innovative within the country.

In the UK, different types of Level 5 awards<sup>3</sup> are plentiful within the higher<sup>4</sup>, further<sup>5</sup>, vocational and professional education sectors, some of which are offered by, or run in conjunction with, professional bodies. Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) engage with the recognition

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<sup>1</sup> In England and Wales, Bachelor degrees typically consist of 360 academic credits (180 ECTS) and have a duration of three years.

<sup>2</sup> formerly known as UK NARIC, pre Brexit January 2021

<sup>3</sup> The most common types of UK Level 5 awards are Foundation Degrees and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs). Foundation Degrees (240 academic credits/120 ECTS) are awarded by universities but delivered by colleges of further education, universities or, exceptionally, industry. Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are “vocational” awards, operated by Pearson Education and typically delivered by colleges of further education.

<sup>4</sup> University sector, ages 18+, EQF Levels 5 -8

<sup>5</sup> Tertiary sector, ages 16+, typically EQF Levels 2 - 6

and accreditation of higher education programmes, including some at Level 5, which meet professional standards. PSRB accredited programmes may include a specified route through to Chartered professional status, a national and international mark of professional competency. There is therefore considerable cachet for PSRB accreditation, making these programmes highly desirable to students, employers and parents. However, this also poses a further challenge for portability of awards, including at Level 5: how can students who have started a professionally recognised course of study in one country cross borders and yet retain the status of their original study?

Myanmar has a century of history of higher education in engineering, with the first BSc degree in Civil Engineering being inaugurated in 1924, due to the presence of oil in the country. Myanmar's engineers are now employed all over the world. In 2019, Myanmar was given provisional approval status as a signatory to the Washington Accord<sup>6</sup>, a major international agreement between bodies responsible for accrediting engineering degree programmes. Within the EHEA, only the UK, Ireland, Russia and Turkey are members.

In 2019, STIMU became the first institution in Myanmar to apply for Washington Accord-aligned accreditation through the UK Engineering Council and Institution of Civil Engineers. The Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Civil Engineering is playing a large part in the accreditation process, and so students would wish to have the portability of this professional status recognised under any transfer arrangement for further study abroad.

The questions then posed are: how could this status be recognised for students progressing from a Level 5 award and who wish to undertake further study within the EHEA, and, more generally, how can we ensure that within Level 5 sufficient acknowledgement of professional status is referenced so as to allow better portability of qualifications?

So, in summary, the three questions I would request help with are:

1. Which of your countries (or institutions) is growing its trans-national education agenda, and would consider expanding collaborative partnerships involving progression routes both into and out of Level 5 awards?
2. Which institutions deliver Level 6 bachelor degree awards in English and would welcome international students who have achieved UK-accredited awards at Level 5?
  - Would these countries enable students to remain in the country to work for a period of time after graduation?
3. Which countries/institutions deliver awards at Levels 5 and 6 which carry internationally recognised professional accreditation alongside the awards themselves?

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London, 15 May 2021  
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## 2 - Two

### **Call for partnership: Students from Rotterdam are seeking contact**

**Keywords: Rotterdam Academy, students, international contacts, study trip, January 2022**

**Suzanne Koster, Rotterdam Academy**

Rotterdam Academy (University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam) wishes to set up a collaboration with partner schools abroad, so that students from different countries can make contact with each other and if possible visit each other. In January '22 students of the Rotterdam Academy will be going on a study trip in Europe and what a good idea would it be if they could be the guests of your students for a day?

Rotterdam Academy is a rapidly growing Associate degree institute with 17 different study programs. We are looking for partners within The Chain 5 network.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ieagreements.org/accords/washington/>

We find it important that students broaden their horizons by making contact with other cultures. Looking across borders at other cultures, other customs, other ways of working increases their cultural sensitivity. But also new friendships can be made this way and a network of contacts is built.



During the preparation of the trip there will be a first contact. This will be about the content of the trip. What do our students definitely need to see, which company visit is a must for them, which college should they pay a visit, where is the best coffee, etc. Together they exchange various information and set up the travel schedule. And in January, they will actually travel and meet your students. Voilà! What do you think?

On behalf of Ruud Boel, lecturer Associate degree Crossmedial Communication, Rotterdam Academy, please contact us for more information or agreements:  
Suzanne Koster, member executive committee CHAIN5, [koster@chain5.net](mailto:koster@chain5.net)

### **3 - Three**

#### **European Level 5 Week – 8 till 12 November 2021**

**Keywords: Study trip, Conference, newsletter, registration**

**Hans Daale, Board CHAIN5**

The second newsletter on European Level 5 Week will be published shortly, having this event from 8 to 12 November, in Zagreb and Maribor. In the first newsletter you could already read what the approach is when it comes to the objectives.

We will discuss this in more detail in the next newsletter, but we will also provide here some information about two "packages" around this EL5W, namely participating in the entire week, as a study trip and being present during the last three days in Maribor. We think that this will provide the opportunity to see with a number of colleagues what is going on and what is going to happen at a strategic, administrative and political level. The focus will be on Higher Vocational-Professional Education at level 5 and the providers and related issues.

Below are a number of parts of the newsletter.

#### **The 1<sup>st</sup> European Level 5 Week**

**8-12 November 2021**

**Powered by CHAIN5**

## A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN LEVEL 5 AREA

Including:  
**Higher Vocational-Professional Education (HVPE)**  
&  
**the European Education Area (EEA)**

### Opportunities and Challenges for Level 5 Education

Looking at:  
**Researches & Projects**  
&  
**New ideas for more transparency of the tertiary sector**

**Zagreb (Croatia) – 8/9 November 2021**

&

**Maribor (Slovenia) – 10/11/12 November 2021**

**How to show your interest in physical participation (the whole week – or the conference (you can do that, without any obligations))**

In the next newsletter you will find further information about the European Level 5 Week, to be held in November, in the expectation that free travel in Europe will be available by then.

For that week we have created two options for physical participation:

- The entire week, with arrival on Monday and departure on Friday afternoon or Saturday – to be seen as a 'study trip'.
- The conference, with arrival on Wednesday and departure on Friday afternoon or Saturday.

#### *Inventory now*

In the newsletter we will discuss organizational matters in more detail. But we would like to know in the coming weeks to what extent there is interest among our members in any of these options around participation. We have created a form for this, which you can complete without obligation (the link will be provided in the newsletter).

#### *Agreements later for both packages*

Later on, we will make further agreements with those involved regarding additional matters of an arrangement for the entire week (the 'study trip') - thus regardless of the costs associated with participation in the social programme and the conference. This includes traveling, transfers, extra dinners and other additional matters. It will also be examined how any air travel and hotels can be included in a kind of 'package', if that is a good option and reservations can be made from CHAIN5.

For the other package that consists of participation in the conference in Maribor, you can also indicate in some weeks whether you want to be there on site. It is also possible now without any obligations, after which we will arrange things further with these group of participants. It will be the case that we do not use a collective approach when it comes to travel and accommodation.

**How to register from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October on for online participation in the conference**

There will also be the opportunity to follow online a large number of the sessions of the conference in Maribor, both on Thursday and Friday. The main points of the programme are therefore already known.

The exact details of the sessions and workshops in which you can participate online will be given in September.

You can then register via our website from 1 October.

There are no further costs associated with participation online.

#### 4 - Four

### OECD Project: Questionnaire

**Keywords: Level 5, SCHE, Institutions**

**OECD, CHAIN5**

Some time ago we reported our collaboration with the OECD on a project being carried out on behalf of the European Commission. It concerns an investigation into the position of level 5 and its providers in the national system - and into aspects that are interesting to consider further. It concerns the Short Cycle HE, i.e. the qualification that has been developed within the Bologna process from 2005 on and has been formally included in the EHEA since 2018.

It would be nice if as many members as possible complete the questionnaire. This is partly due to the commitment by the OECD that a presentation will be given on the results and conclusions during the European Level 5 Week on 11 or 12 November.

The questionnaire and an explanation can be found at:

<https://www.chain5.net/activities/>

You can send the completed questionnaire to:

[Viktoria.KIS@oecd.org](mailto:Viktoria.KIS@oecd.org) and [Simon.NORMANDEAU@oecd.org](mailto:Simon.NORMANDEAU@oecd.org)

#### 5 – Five

### Survey Theme Group Internationalisation

**Keywords: Survey, level 5, exchange, diversity, interculturality**

**Nina Spithost**

The CHAIN5 theme group on internationalisation is pleased to report about an interesting survey. The Rotterdam Academy (Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences) and NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences have developed a questionnaire with the intention to find out in what way internationalisation is already visible in level 5 study programmes and how it is developing at the moment. During the most recent Annual Conference, a working session was already dedicated to this topic.

The survey aims to raise awareness of this specific theme and to sketch a picture of how various level 5 programmes are developing in this respect. This will give us the opportunity to share the experience and knowledge gained in those programmes and possibly achieve good cooperation on this theme.

The survey is based on two perspectives:

1. Internationalisation from the traditional perspective of exchange, mobility online or offline, and
2. Internationalisation to be seen from the development of students in terms of the value of diversity and interculturality.

As the survey is now already for some time active in the Netherlands, we have received requests from several countries to join this initiative and to give level 5 institutions the opportunity to complete the survey also. In this way it is possible for them to gain more insight into the developments concerning this theme, in their own country, and perhaps also to compare these with developments elsewhere.

All information about this survey and how you can participate in it for your institute can be found at <https://www.chain5.net/internationalisation/>