

HOW TO FIGHT!

...FOR THE ECTS LABEL

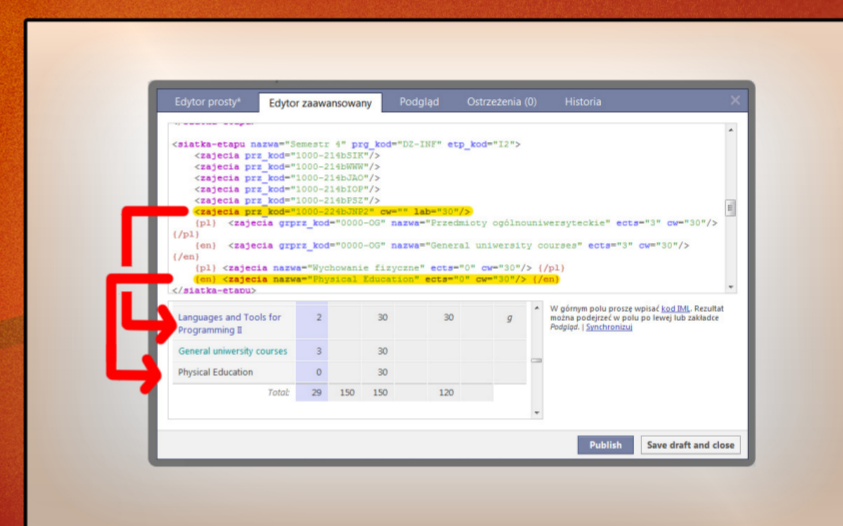
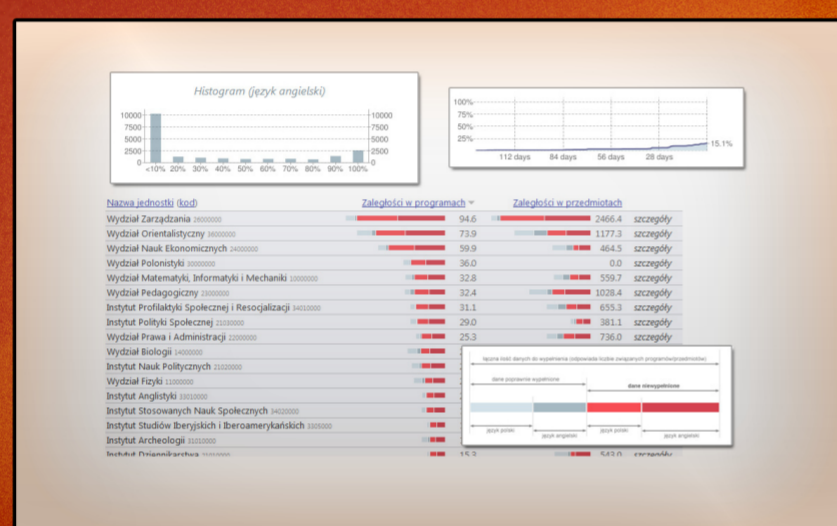
ECTS STUDY GUIDE – IS IT POSSIBLE TO HANDLE THE TOUGH TASK IN AN EASY WAY?

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Building and maintaining institutional ECTS Study Guide may be a real burden. It requires a dedicated, user-friendly, easy to use information system and a tremendous organizational effort involved in gathering in it all relevant information on study programmes and courses offered by the

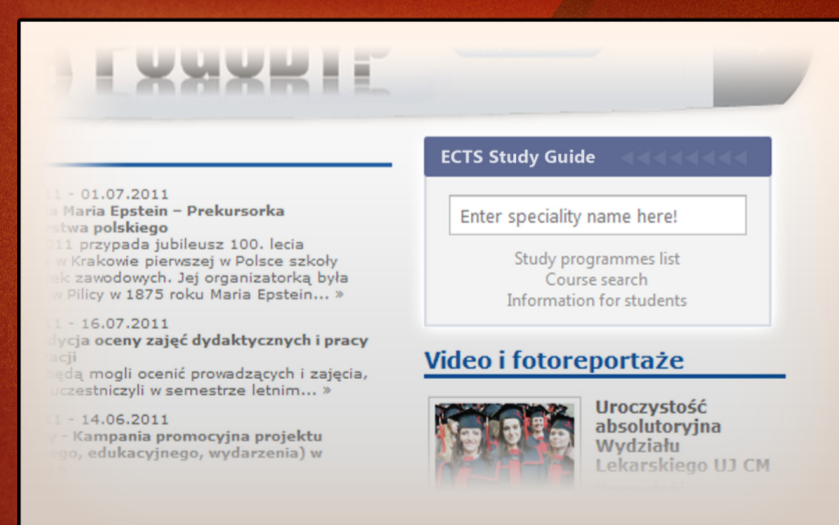
Higher Education Institution. Keeping it up to date is another challenge. Almost every university in the European Higher Education Area maintains ECTS Study Guide, however **as yet only a few have been awarded ECTS Label**, the respective recognition of the quality in internationalization procedures.

Our task was to develop software **for** building and maintaining ECTS Study Guide. We searched for solutions that would encourage institutions and faculties to accept the challenge and follow the road leading to the ECTS label, step by step. We present the most helpful functionalities, but there are many others (like automatic software updates from code repository, information versioning, automatic synchronization of data gathered from various sources, on-line error detection and notification).



To measure how far are individual faculties from reaching the stated goals, the software dynamically evaluates information gathered in the system and displays the results in the administration panel. **Each element of data is analyzed and receives a score, based on some heuristics.** For example, if course description in English is too short, it gets some negative points. If part of course structure diagram for a study programme is missing or data is not up-to-date, it also loses points. In fact, so many aspects are being analyzed, that it may be quite difficult to get the 100% score. But surely, if the institution gets more than 80%, it deserves the ECTS Label!

The implementation is targeted at institutions which use USOS*. This is a frequent situation that the data which is needed in the ECTS Guide is already stored somewhere else (e.g. in student admission system or web course catalogue). We designed a HTML-based language (called IML) to facilitate reuse of information by referencing external data. A basic example is the **“course”** element, which automatically fills itself with a course name and a proper URL. A more specialized IML tag is **<class>** (in Polish: **<zajecia>**), which is described below.

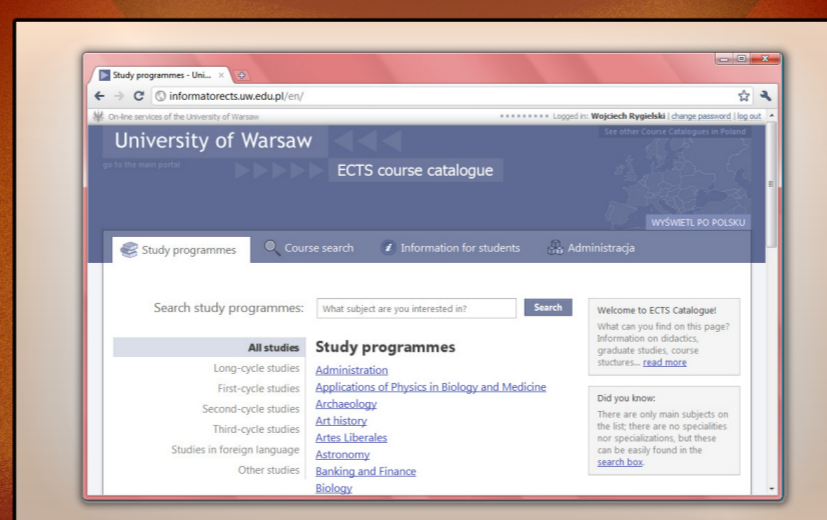


Course structure diagrams described in IML are dynamically **parsed, checked and interpreted.** As a result, the data might be used also for automatic **cross-referencing.** For example, if the course is mentioned in the study programme description, then the programme will appear on the page with the course description. And the faculty, which delivers this course will receive a higher score in the ECTS Label evaluation. The table in the picture was rendered from IML **<class>** tags (you may see the IML input in the previous picture), which are context specific: they bind a course to the currently described programme stage, dynamically evaluate proper ECTS points (for this course and stage) and combine it with other course attributes obtained from USOS in a form of a HTML table.

The table shows course details for 'Semestr I'. The columns are ECTS, lect, cf, list, lab, poem, exam. The rows include 'Mathematical Analysis for Computer Science I', 'Geometry with Linear Algebra', 'Fundamentals of Mathematics', 'Introductory Programming (imperative approach)', 'Intellectual property rights - basic course', 'Workplace health and safety', and 'Physical Education'. A 'Total' row shows 29, 158, 180, 30.

Thanks to the set of **embeddable snippets**, key parts of the Guide can be easily added to ANY webpage. Instead of copying and pasting course diagrams or search engine between sites, one can embed them with a line of JavaScript code and have them updated automatically from now on.

(Picture: AJAX Programme Search snippet)



Last but not least: **Clear user interface.** Ease of use. Intuitive and dynamic search engines. Easy to follow structure of data. Low cost of administration. We hope that all these benefits will be appreciated by the institutions, and will soon become available to students and prospective students of many Polish universities.

See our promotional video (in Polish) for more: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHpyCCXYHV8>

* - USOS (University Study-Oriented System) is a computer system that manages most study-related activities in over 30 higher education institutions in Poland.