

Malta Business School

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Revision History			
Version No.	Review Date	Revised by	Summary of changes
Version 0	06-10-2017	CC	Setting up the RPL policy.
Version 01	06-10-2020	CC	Inclusion of process map.
Version 02	09-07-2021	CC	Policy updated to reflect EU reports.
Version 03	06-07-2023	CC	Addition about the recording of results
Version 04	26-03-2024	CC	Policy and process approved by MFHEA with minimal changes.
Version 05	01-10-2025	CC	Cosmetic changes.

MBS Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

1. Introduction

Malta Business School (MBS) has a Teaching & Learning Strategy designed to help ensure that the goals as articulated in the School's Mission and Vision Statements are fulfilled. This also includes Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). RPL is a generic statement that includes different types of learning as mentioned in Section 2 below.

2. RPL meaning

RPL is a process which gives recognition to learning, whether from formal programmes such as those delivered by MBS, other educational institutions, experience, or informal learning. Such learning can be considered equivalent to the level and learning outcomes of parts of a programme of studies that the learner wants to follow.

This RPL process is used to promote personal and professional development. Such as, when candidates would have already carried out prior learning on a subject and would like to be exempt from that part of the programme of studies; or when candidates are considered eligible for a programme of studies on the basis of RPL.

Qualifications will be evaluated against the guidelines of the Malta Further and Higher Educational Authority (MFHEA), the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), and the Level Descriptors of the MQF.

At MBS, the following three different categories of RPL may be considered:

- Recognition of prior formal learning
- Recognition of prior experiential learning
- Recognition of prior informal certified learning

2.1 Recognition of prior formal learning

This recognition is given in the form of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to learning which is already achieved as an academic qualification awarded by a recognised higher education institution and in accordance with the Malta qualifications framework (MQF).

An example of this would be a successfully achieved Certificate or Diploma programme from MBS or another educational institution.

2.2 Recognition of prior experiential, informal learning

This recognition is given in the form of ECTS to learning which is experiential or informal, typically gained through vocational education and training (VET), work or voluntary experience, following an assessment process by MBS. The School adheres to the Malta “Manual for the Conversion of Qualifications into ECVET Systems” which is a guide to educational institutions about converting qualifications in line with the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

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An example of this would be skills acquired through volunteering, youth work or sports; activities at home such as taking care of a child or an elderly family member; and skills acquired informally from work such as ICT skills, time management and project management skills.

2.3 Recognition of prior non-formal learning

This recognition is given in the form of ECTS to learning which is organised and planned and where learners have the support from a trainer. Such learning typically happens at the workplace, such as professional development programmes to upskill and train employees. This type of learning also happens at social or civic clubs, groups, and organisations, where training is organised for members and/or the general public.

An example of this would be courses held at the workplace such as to improve soft or hard skills; structured online learning such as following a MOOC course; and attending a course at a social or civic club such as an environment NGO, Scouts or Girl Guides, or sports club.

3. Credit transfer system

The recognition, or validation, of learning is called a credit transfer system. (The word 'credit' here is not to be confused with 'UK credits', since there is no connection between the two.) A credit transfer system assigns ECTS to prior learning after an RPL process. ECTS can be given either through an individual application, or as part of a formal arrangement between MBS and another (external) educational institution.

MBS offers learners the opportunity to transfer ECTS or ECVET from prior study. In this document, any reference to ECTS can mean both ECTS and ECVET.

Prior study needs to be recognised as an accredited achievement by the MFHEA and be part of MQF which is equivalent to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). Learners can only transfer whole, recognised, and achieved modules/units. Part units cannot be considered for ECTS transfer.

As the admitting Educational Institution, MBS has the final decision when determining whether RPL can be applied, by how many ECTS, and in consideration of the programme that the applicant wants to follow. MBS is not required to grant RPL ECTS, however will endeavour to do so in the best interest of the learner.

4. Application of RPL

MBS will strive to give all the information about the RPL to prospective applicants. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to apply for RPL and to provide proof to support their application. Application of RPL should be done prior to, or at least together with, the application for the particular programme of studies.

5. Eligibility criteria for individual applicants

To be eligible for RPL a number of criteria need to be satisfied by the learner as follows.

5.1 Recognised qualifications. Learners need to provide:

- A statement that shows that the institution is recognised and licensed to deliver such qualifications.
- An MQRIC statement of authenticity, or similar.
- The name, location, and nature of the institution where the learning has taken place.
- The start and finish dates of attendance at the institution where qualifications were obtained.
- A transcript of studies including where these studies sit on the MQF/EQF.
- A curriculum of studies outlining details of study at the institution.

5.2 Recognition of informal certified learning.

Learners need to note that courses delivered in industry, or vocational programmes, will only be considered if the number of hours of the programme is a minimum of 16 hours. This also includes courses delivered online (such as MOOCs). Learners need to provide the following evidence:

- Whether the institution is recognised and licensed to deliver such courses.
- The name, location, and nature of the institution where the learning has taken place.
- The start and finish dates of attendance at the institution where learning took place.
- A transcript of studies, and where possible, where these studies sit on the MQF/EQF.
- A curriculum of studies outlining details of the course.

5.3 Relevant work experience in the same or related field.

Learners need to provide:

- An updated CV, including all start and finish dates of employment, together with an explanation of the nature of (each) role. Actions, activities, and responsibilities taken on by the learner should be highlighted.
- A statement showing a detailed account of all learning that has taken place at the work environment.
- Learners will be asked to provide a reference from an employer, client, supplier, or other work-related source, to verify that the learning has indeed taken place.

5.4 RPL as a 'maturity' clause for admission onto a programme of study. Used to gain entry to an Award, Certificate, Diploma, Degree, or other qualification, and as per age guidelines specified in the admission criteria of the particular programme/course being applied for.

5.5 Willingness of the learner to provide evidence, and to be available for any interviews, appraisals, or other competency-based tests as deemed applicable by MBS, and according to the programme of studies.

5.6 Motivation of the learner to follow formal learning with MBS, especially if the RPL applied for is on the basis of relevant work experience.

6. Responsibilities of the School

The admissions team will review all RPL applications and adhere to an RPL process as described in Section 7 of this document.

General criteria that are essential to this process:

- That learning needs to have taken place within the last 10 years. More recent learning will, of course, be preferred.
- That there is matching of the level and the learning outcomes for those modules/units for which the application of prior learning is being sought.
- That the applicant has successfully achieved the modules/units for which the application of prior learning is being sought through a formal learning scenario.
- That appropriate evidence has been brought forward as proof of learning claimed.
- The minimum number of credits that can be awarded is 4 ECTS.
- The maximum number of credits that can be awarded is not more than 60% of the programme.

6.1 At MBS, RPL is available for home-grown qualifications, and where appropriate, other courses according to the guidelines and rules of the accreditation body.

6.2 Individuals who have previously been registered with MBS, but who did not achieve the qualification, cannot apply for RPL for the same programme.

6.3 The RPL process can include any of the following approaches to be able to accurately assess evidence:

- Questioning (oral, written or both)
- Inspection and evaluation of assessments with national agencies
- Testimonials and/or References
- Third-party reports/documents that related to the learning outcomes relevant to the qualification/programme of studies
- Review of portfolio of learner's work
- Participation of learners on assessment activities

7. Process of RPL

In order for the School to ensure fairness and consistency, the process described below is applied to all RPL applications.

Process phase	Task	Responsibility
Approach phase		
Providing advice to prospective learners about the RPL process	<p>Give information to prospective learners and explain what RPL means.</p> <p>Guide prospective learners on whether they can apply for RPL, and how they can apply.</p> <p>Provide clear and adequate information to enable prospective learners to prepare their evidence as required for the RPL assessment process.</p>	<p>Programme Leader, Programme Administrator, a member of the Admissions team and/or Customer Support Representative</p> <p>With the support of a member from the academic team.</p> <p>Monitoring by the Academic team.</p>
Application for RPL	<p>Filling in the course application form. Filling in the RPL applicant form.</p> <p>Gathering all relevant documentation. (Refer to Section 6 of this document, and specific documents for individual modules.)</p>	Prospective learner/Applicant

Assessment phase		
Assessing evidence	Preliminary assessment of evidence provided. During this phase of the process the prospective learner can be asked to provide further information, which can be in the form of sitting for an assessment, or attending an interview, or through other means. Please refer to Section 6.4 of this document.	RPL Assessor With monitoring and support provided by the Academic team or Programme Leader.
Competency based mapping.	Evidence provided mapped onto the learning outcomes of the module/programme.	RPL Assessor With monitoring and support provided by the Academic team
Recording phase		
Recording the outcome	Decisions taken and result of the RPL process recorded on the appropriate form.	RPL Assessor With monitoring and support provided by the Academic team

Reporting phase		
Reporting the outcome	<p>Reporting the results of the RPL process to the prospective learner keeping the Administration team in copy.</p> <p>The learner and the Administration team will be told whether RPL has been granted, the level and number of ECTS being awarded, and the specific modules that the learner will be exempt from, as a result of the RPL process.</p> <p>The learner will also be made aware whether there are any compulsory modules which need to be achieved and any restrictions, over and above normal MBS requirements, that the learner needs to adhere to.</p>	Programme Leader, Programme Administrator, or Customer Support Representative

Appeal phase		
Requesting a review of the decision	In cases where the RPL has been denied, or the prospective learner feels that they have put forward relevant information, they can appeal the decision, and present their point of view.	Prospective learner

Applying again for RPL (Appeal Assessment phase)

Appeal (Resubmission attempt)	<p>If the prospective learner's appeal is deemed adequate, such as when the prospective learner brings forward new information or evidence, the School will consider a resubmission attempt to apply for RPL.</p> <p>Once such a resubmission is in hand, the process starts again from the Assessment phase.</p>	<p>The Academic Manager or Head of Programmes</p> <p>With monitoring and support provided by the Academic Manager or Programme Leader.</p>
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Quality Assurance - ongoing throughout the process

Monitoring of the process and assuring that relevant quality arrangements are in place	<p>Check that the process is being implemented as per this policy document.</p> <p>Monitor decisions taken and give feedback when necessary.</p> <p>Make sure that the policy and the procedures are aligned, learner centred, and that a reliable, uniform, and transparent approach is being implemented with all prospective applicants.</p>	<p>Academic manager</p> <p>With support from the Programmes Manager</p>
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8. Timeline of the RPL process

The following timeline will be applied to the RPL process.

Process phase	Timeline	Communication
Approach phase		
Providing advice to prospective learners about the RPL process	Ongoing	Ongoing and on a rolling basis.
Application for RPL	Ongoing	Ongoing and on a rolling basis

Assessment phase		
Assessing evidence	<p>2 weeks for a preliminary assessment of evidence provided.</p> <p>2 weeks from the submission of the RPL form and documentation.</p> <p>2 further weeks from submission of documents if the applicant is asked to provide further information. This is considered as the 2nd attempt.</p> <p>A 2nd attempt is not available during an Appeal.</p>	<p>Between the RPL Assessor and the Customer Support Representative. The RPL Assessor can also communicate directly with the applicant.</p> <p>If further information is required, the RPL Assessor can communicate directly with the applicant.</p>
Competency based mapping.	4 weeks to review documents for the competency based mapping exercise. All necessary information needs to be available to the RPL assessor before the start of this timeline.	Typically, directly between the RPL Assessor and the applicant, although communication can be between the RPL Assessor and the Customer Support Representative.

Recording phase		
Recording the outcome	The recording on the appropriate form happens within the assessment phase.	Internal communication only.

Reporting phase		
Reporting the outcome	Within one week of the end of the assessment phase.	<p>The RPL Assessor will inform the Administration team and the Customer Support Representative whether RPL has been granted, the level and number of ECTS being awarded, and the specific modules that the learner will be exempt from, as a result of the RPL process.</p> <p>The Customer Support Representative reports the results of the RPL process to the applicant keeping the Administration team in copy.</p> <p>The applicant will also be made aware whether there are any compulsory modules which need to be achieved and any restrictions, over and above normal MBS requirements, that the learner needs to adhere to.</p>

Appeal phase		
The applicant requests a review of the decision of the RPL application.	Within 2 weeks of issuing of the result of the RPL process by MBS.	<p>Typically, such communication starts between the applicant and the Customer Support Representative.</p> <p>The Customer Support Representative scales up such correspondence with the Academic Manager.</p>

Applying again for RPL (Appeal Assessment phase)		
Appeal (Resubmission attempt)	<p>3 weeks to review the appeal and to consider whether the appeal is justified or not.</p> <p>Once the appeal is considered to be justified the process starts again from the Assessment phase.</p>	Communication between the applicant and the Academic Manager or between the applicant and the Head of Programmes.

Quality Assurance – ongoing throughout the process		
Monitoring of the process and assuring that relevant quality arrangements are in place.	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Make sure that the policy and the procedures are aligned, learner centred, and that a reliable, uniform, and transparent approach is being implemented with all prospective applicants.</p>	<p>Communication between the Academic manager and the Head of Programmes, together with internal quality audit checks to:</p> <p>Review the RPL process.</p> <p>Check that the process is being implemented as per this policy document.</p> <p>Monitor decisions taken and give feedback when necessary.</p>

9. Recording of results in final transcript

In keeping with usual academic procedures, learners who are exempted from one or more modules will not receive any marks/grades for these same modules. In the transcript these modules will be marked as 'RPL' to show that the learner has been excused from following these same modules with MBS. When there are such exemptions, the final classification will be calculated from the total of ECTS actually undertaken. So, for example, if a learner has been exempt from 10 ECTS, the final classification will be calculated from 50 ECTS, rather than the full 60 ECTS for the year, and weighed accordingly.

10. Fees

At MBS the process of RPL is €45 per candidate. In case of an Appeal, the fee is €25 per ECTS of the study programme/module/unit that is being applied for. Therefore, for example, if the RPL Appeal application is for 8ECTS, then the fee will be €200. The RPL process does not affect the fee of the programme which needs to be paid in full following any RPL exemptions.

11. Acronyms used in this document

MBS	Malta Business School
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
MFHEA	Malta Further & Higher Education Authority
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
MQF	Malta Qualification Framework
EQF	European Qualification Framework

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