

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

Policies and Procedures

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1. Purpose

The purpose of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedure is to recognize and, where appropriate, accredit the learning and experience – both formal, non-formal and informal – gained by individuals in terms of skills, knowledge and competencies.

This is important because individuals can also gain experience through learning processes happening in other environments, such as the workplace, other than traditional education learning.

The policies established in this document are intended to guide the Team of *OPIT – Open Institute of Technology* (hereinafter, “OPIT”) in managing RPL transparently and consistently, through clear principles and processes set forth in this document.

Formalizing the RPL process, OPIT will widen access to education and training opportunities, supporting individuals with the potential to join a higher education study path regardless of their background. This is also in line with OPIT’s mission of *“Unlocking a brighter future through the power of education”*, by expanding OPIT’s inclusiveness and accessibility.

The RPL process will be based on the matching principle, thus verifying the correspondence between the learning outcomes, skills, and knowledge, and matching them with the entry requirements of the training for which the individual applies.

Evidence will be requested from the student applying for RPL; it can be of different forms. Following a non-exhaustive list of forms of evidence that the applicant can provide:

- CV
- Certificates
- References
- Portfolios

The policies and procedures described in this document are supervised by the Didactic Board and will apply to all the training programs and degrees offered by OPIT. All the students can apply for RPL in order to:

- Be admitted to a formal qualification or award; or
- Be exempted from some components or modules of a formal qualification or award.

2. Glossary

2.1 Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning (RPL)

The process through which an individual can have his/her learning formally recognized and accredited to be admitted or exempted to specific components/modules of a qualification or award using learning outcomes. It includes formal, non-formal and informal learning and experiences gained by the individual in the past.

2.2 Formal Learning

Formal learning refers to the structured and intentional process of gaining knowledge and skills through educational institutions or programs. It typically involves a defined curriculum, set learning objectives, and assessment methods, such as exams or assignments. Formal learning can take place in various settings, including schools, universities, vocational training centers, and online courses. It is usually guided by a teacher or instructor and leads to a recognized qualification, such as a degree or diploma. Formal learning is often contrasted with informal learning, which occurs through everyday experiences and self-directed activities.

2.3 Non-formal Learning

Non-formal learning refers to intentional learning that takes place outside of a formal educational setting, such as a school or college. It may be organized or structured, but it does not lead to a formal qualification. Examples of non-formal learning include workshops, training courses, and community-based programs. Non-formal learning can provide individuals with new skills, knowledge, and competencies that can enhance their personal and professional development.

2.4 Informal Learning

Informal learning refers to unintentional or incidental learning that occurs through daily life experiences, such as reading, watching videos, or engaging in conversations with others. It is not structured or organized, and it may not lead to a formal qualification. Informal learning can be spontaneous, self-directed, and can occur anywhere and at any time. Examples of informal learning include learning a new language through immersion or learning to cook through trial and error. Informal learning can contribute to an individual's personal growth and development.

3. Types of RPL offered

OPIT provides the following RPL:

- *Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)* – this RPL process refers to the identification and accreditation of knowledge, skills, understanding and competencies that individuals have developed throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning.
- *Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL)* – is a process used to recognize and award academic credit for learning that has been acquired through work experience, volunteering, and other forms of experiential learning. AEL involves a rigorous assessment process that evaluates the learning outcomes and competencies acquired through experiential learning to determine whether they meet the standards for academic credit. This process allows individuals to earn credit towards a qualification based on their prior learning and experience, providing them with a pathway to formal education and career advancement.
- *Recognition of Accredited Prior Learning (RAPL or RAPEL)* – This involves granting credit towards a qualification based on previous accredited studies (e.g. modules within accredited programs, accredited awards, etc.) completed at a different institution. The credit is awarded for courses that are deemed to be equivalent in content and level. This Accredited Prior Learning is formally assessed and, if deemed equivalent, leads to the award of ECTS for the student to be exempted or to be offered advanced entry to a program.

4. Conditions and Eligibility

Policy and procedures described in this document will be applied to all the training programmes offered by OPIT, for individuals who want to take part in formal and accredited training offered by OPIT.

Below are the conditions and eligibility criteria:

- Individuals can use this RPL procedure to be admitted to a formal qualification/award or to be exempted from modules of the qualification.
- Exemptions can only relate to an entire module of a training programme, and not to individual components of it.
- Individuals are asked to submit an application, following the Application Process described in this document, together with evidence of the specific learning outcomes and experiences gained. Evidence must be in writing, with the submission of a portfolio. The individual is in charge of the preparation of the portfolio, following the instructions and with the support of the Student Secretary Office (whose role is defined in OPIT IQA

manual).

- The maximum amount of credits that may be gained as a result of a *RAPL* or *RAPEL* process is 50% of the study programme chosen by the individual and approved by the MFHEA.
- The maximum amount that may be gained as a result of an *APL* or *APEL* process is 2 modules of the study programme chosen by the individual and approved by the MFHEA.
- The minimum amount is equal to the smallest component within the study programme chosen.
- It is not possible to award a full qualification/award/degree solely through the RPL process.
- Any credits obtained through an RPL process can only be given once the individual has completed the study programme.
- Exemptions will be shown in the Student's Transcript and indicated as "*Exempted by RPL*", only upon successful completion of the study programme.
- The ultimate decision to give individuals access/exemptions through RPL remains with the Program Head (the person who is formally in charge of the Program within the Institution) or a person within the organization delegated by the Program Head.
- Double counting¹ of prior learning is not permitted.
- To evaluate a program, which does not follow the Bologna process², a clear identification of all the components of the program together with all the details should be provided.
- Recognition cannot be given for a dissertation module nor for elective modules

5. The Application Process

In order to ensure transparency and consistency throughout the whole process, this section defines the application process for an RPL; this process must be followed and applied by all the departments within OPIT. Staff involved through the whole process will be trained and supported in order to carry out their role efficiently. The Application process consists of four Stages.

5.1 Orientation and Guidance

RPL guidelines for individuals wishing to apply to RPL, are published on the OPIT website to ensure that the applicants are informed about how to make an RPL claim. Such guidelines include information on how to make an RPL claim, how to prepare the evidence portfolio, how to prepare the evidence that demonstrates previously gained learning and experiences, and the training programmes for which RPL is applicable.

¹ Double counting is the use of a credit, which was used to obtain another qualification.

²<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>

Before starting the application process, the applicant can informally contact the Student Secretary Office in order to receive an informal evaluation of the number of credits/exemptions he/she can gain. This can occur through an online video call, a call, by email or by other communication means and the applicant will be requested to submit an updated English CV's and any documents supporting the learning and experiences gained and relevant to the specific programme of interest. The documents collected will be submitted to the Student Secretary Office which will then provide the applicant with relevant information about which recognition he/she can obtain, how he/she can use the credits to gain entry admission or exemptions, and indicate the evidence that the applicant will need to collect in order to build his/her portfolio.

This informal procedure does not lead to any official RPL.

5.2 Formal Application

All the individuals wishing to start an RPL procedure have to send an email to the Student Secretary Office (rpl@opit.com), as also indicated on OPIT website.

Applicants will be requested to fill in an online Application Form (see a copy at https://forms.opit.com/opit/form/RPLApplicationForm1/formperma/_TTzG-o8NVeqJWTyUIOoegfD6Mht_gwIkEI9fHMGFJg), to be submitted together with the portfolio of evidence.

The documents and evidence submitted by the applicant will first be verified and vetted by the RPL Coordinator, in order to check if the applicant's details are valid and correct, along with his/her recommendations. Once validated, they are sent to the Program Head (or a person within the organization delegated by the Program Head) who is in charge of the evaluation and approval/rejection of the evidence provided.

The evaluation takes place on the basis of the following criteria:

- Validity – evidence has to match the learning outcomes of the training chosen by the applicant.
- Sufficiency – sufficient documentation must be provided as evidence to demonstrate the achievement of the learning objectives to be claimed.
- Authenticity – applicants are responsible for the authenticity of the documentation provided.
- Currency – documentation provided should be up-to-date with current knowledge and practice.

All the competencies claimed by the applicants will be organized in a map according to the learning outcomes of the programme chosen, to determine eligibility for admission and/or the number of credits / ECTS that may be recognized.

In the application form, the applicant has to clearly state the outcome that would like to obtain, which has to be chosen from the following list:

- Claim for admission purpose onto a study programme
- Claim for exemption from specific modules of an existing programme
- Credit transfer

The Formal Application should be made at least 1 months prior the start of the chosen training programme. Though OPIT will do its utmost to process all RPL applications in time, it cannot guarantee that those submitted later than the previously stated deadline can be processed in time for the next training programme intake.

In case of an application for an exemption, this can be processed only once the applicant has demonstrated that the admission requirements for the chosen training are met. This is a responsibility of the Student Secretary Office.

5.3 Assessment and Interview

Once all the documents have been received and they satisfy the criteria mentioned above, they will be assessed by one or more persons within the Student Secretary Office (depending on the area of study) for evaluation.

The Student Secretary Office will produce a communication with the final recommendations, to be then sent as defined in Section 8. As part of this stage, applicants might be requested, based on the type of RPL Application they submit and request, to have an online interview with a representative(s) of the Student Secretary Office to ensure the results of the analysis and verify the competencies that the applicant wants to claim. Such an interview might be recorded and archived for future evidence. In the case in which the interview is not sufficient, the applicant may be requested to do competency-based tests or other interviews.

5.4 The Learning Portfolio

The applicant is responsible for the preparation of a learning portfolio, to be submitted together with the Application form. This includes all the documentation showing evidence and demonstrating the learning outcomes achieved by the applicant.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the documents that the applicant may provide as evidence, within the portfolio:

	Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)	Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL)	Recognition of Accredited Prior Learning (RAPL or RAPEL)
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Detailed and up-to-date English CV	Compulsary (C)	C	C
Certificates (in case of degree, a scanned colored copy of the certificate and academic transcripts is requested. In case the original document is in a language that is different from English, a certified translation in English must be provided).	Not-Compulsary (NC)	NC	NC
Exam transcript and a document describing the learning content and outcome gained by the student for each module or course	NC	NC	C
Written and signed letters of reference by employers	-	C (at least 2)	-
Reports from internship experiences.	NC	NC	NC
Professional Certifications	NC	NC	NC
Evidence of participation in projects and any other work-related activity	NC	C	NC
Evidence of participation in foreign exchange periods	NC	NC	-
Examples of works performed .	NC	C	-

6. Credit Transfer

The credit transfer procedure applies when the individual has gained formal ECTS credits through another formal training and claims them in order to enter at an advanced stage of a study programme offered by OPIT, or to be exempted from modules of that study programme.

This process needs academic judgment to determine whether the prior study module on which the individual gained credits matches an equivalent module at OPIT's selected programme.

- Credit transfer through RPL may be asked to award single modules, if the individual can demonstrate that the learning outcome (in terms of knowledge, skills, and

competencies) match with the one of the prior learning.

Cases of combination between Credit Transfer and RPL can occur.

It is not possible to award a full qualification/award solely through the credit transfer process.

7. Results, Resubmission, and Appeal

Results of the RPL process will be communicated to the applicant by the Student Secretary Office within 30 days of receipt of the application via email address.

The outcome might be one of the following:

- Full acceptance of the claim for admission onto a study programme.
- Full/Partial acceptance of the claim for module exemption within a study programme.
- Full/Partial acceptance of the claim for credit transfer.
- A request for resubmission of the claim (including the request for additional evidence)
- Failure of the claim, with recommendations for alternative paths.
- Failure of the claim

The applicant shall have the right to appeal in case he/she is dissatisfied with the outcome. This is the procedure to appeal:

- The applicant has to inform the Student Secretary Office, by sending an email to rpl@opit.com
- Any appeal needs to be supported by further additional evidence and documentation.
- Appeals must be done within 15 days after the results are communicated to the applicant.
- An external expert is nominated by the Student Secretary Office and the applicant will receive the appeal results within 15 days from the date the external expert received the documents.

8. Responsibilities and Quality Assurance

Any credit and exemption gained through the RPL process shall be recorded in the student data system, together with the Application form, the portfolio, and any documentation submitted as evidence, following the policies stated in the OPIT IQA, regarding students' data.

In case of Credit Transfer or exemptions for specific modules of a training programme, these will be recorded in the student's transcript. Indicated as "*Exempted by RPL*", only upon successful completion of the study programme.

The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the RPL process and procedures lies with the Quality Manager of OPIT.