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RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

POLICY & PROCEDURES

VERSION 1.0

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recognition of Prior Learning (or RPL) is a process that assesses a learner's competency whether acquired through formal and informal learning in order to determine if the requirements for a unit of study offered by Outlook Coop Training Institute are met. Previous learning and experiences acquired are evaluated and this presents an opportunity of understanding the learner's level of expertise within his / her specific field of experience and prior learning. When applied properly, RPL procedures sidestep the necessity of repeating previous learning, whilst ensuring that recognition is only awarded upon presentation of strong proof of successful achievement of the learning outcomes applicable to the level and content of the award for which the learner has applied.

2. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Process whereby a learner's evidence of earlier learning and achievement, whether through formal, experiential or non-formal learning, is assessed and certified to gain recognition.
Formal Learning	Formal learning is that which takes place as intended within formally constituted educational institutions such as schools, colleges universities, training centres. It follows a type of learning program in which the goals and objectives are defined by the training department, instructional designer, and/or instructor. Formal learning is also called structured learning or synchronous learning and leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited certification.
Non-Formal Learning	Non-formal learning takes place outside formal learning environments but within some kind of organisational framework. It need not follow a formal syllabus or be governed by external accreditation and assessment. Non-formal learning arises from the learner's conscious decision to master a particular activity, skill or area of knowledge and is thus the result of intentional effort.
Informal Learning	Informal learning takes place outside schools and colleges and arises from the learner's involvement in activities that are not undertaken with a learning purpose in mind. Informal learning is involuntary and an inescapable part of daily life; for that reason, it is sometimes called experiential learning.
Non-Traditional Learner	Non-traditional learner is anyone who attends tertiary education in a format or time frame that differs from the traditional route. Also referred to as Adult Learners or Lifelong Learners, they are usually over 24 years of age

	and have had multiple years of work experience (including stay-at-home parenting). They likely have more responsibilities and established work, family, and other life commitments.
Recognition of Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL)	The process of gaining recognition of certified prior learning obtained at an accredited or recognised institution which can lead to exemptions from parts of an Outlook Coop Training Institute study course.
Recognition of Prior EXPERIENTIAL Learning (RPEL)	The process of gaining recognition of non-formal and informal experiential learning which may have been accredited within a work environment, a voluntary organisation, life experiences or uncertified learning contexts
European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	System also referred to as Credits which involves 25 hours of workload as used for programmes as EQF / MQF level 5 or above
European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET)	System also referred to as Credits which involves 25 hours of workload as used for programmes as EQF/MQF level Introductory A & B to EQF/MQF level 4
RPL Coordinator	Coordinates the RPL procedures within the training institute and is the first point of contact for learners prior to commencing, supporting applicants throughout the process. This role is also assigned to the Course Coordinator.

3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process and guidelines to provide accurate recognition and evidencing of knowledge, understanding and skills that have previously been achieved and certificated. Ultimately the policy will support Outlook Coop Training Institute with the planning, advising and delivering of learning.

The recognition of achievement is enabled through a range of activities using appropriate assessment methodology. The evidence of learning achieved should be:

- Valid – work must be relevant to the assessment criteria
- Authentic – work must be solely attributable to the learner
- Current – work is still relevant at the time of assessment
- Sufficient – work covers all the assessment criteria

RPL enables a candidate to gain entry or access for a chosen program of studies by allowing the applicant to demonstrate learning achieved through a range of learning experiences (as indicated in the above table). **Only 50% of the total amount of credits from the selected full course of studies may be achieved through recognition and accreditation prior to learning.**

4. GENERAL GUIDELINES

4.1 Outlook Coop Training Institute recognises 4 different types of RPL for course admissions and module exemptions.

- a. Recognition of Prior Certified Learning – RPCL
- b. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning – RPEL
- c. European Credit Transfer System – ECTS
- d. European Credit Transfer System for VET - ECVET

4.2 Prospective applicants should seek immediate guidance prior to applying through the RPL Coordinator. They must **provide the necessary evidence in writing that they have achieved the specific learning outcomes at the required levels while filling a declaration form that the evidence produced is exclusively their own.** The decision on whether to allow applicants to gain access to / exemption from study modules through RPL rests with the Course Coordinator after consultation with the relevant academic staff.

4.3 Claims for exemption from study modules should be against whole modules or components of a programme. Claims cannot be made against part of modules. Some programmes of study might not lend themselves to RPL, these could include:

- Studies which lead to regulated professional accreditation
- Studies which require a minimum number of hours to deem candidates fit for practice
- Those delivered by Outlook Coop Training Institute but which are awarded by third parties
- Studies which lead to a professional warrant (includes those which may require renewal of licence to practice).

4.4 In order to obtain exemption or to be allocated credits, the applicant must have obtained a pass mark within the same guidelines used by the training institute. Course entry requirements shall specify whether RPL will be accepted as an entry requirement or as part of the entry requirements.

5. RESPONSABILITIES

The responsibility for the effective implementation of the RPL policy lies with the Course Coordinator after consultation with the relevant technical / academic staff engaged by Outlook Coop Training Institute. It is in the interest of the institute that RPL processes, procedures and practices are transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible.

6. RPL STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Outlook Coop Training Institute is committed to dedicate resources to the smooth running of the RPL process and to upskill staff as necessary. Capacity building will be promoted and the necessary support will be provided to the staff involved in the management, assessment, student support and administration of RPL procedures within the institute.

7. CREDIT TRANSFER

The amount of credit that may be awarded is entirely at the discretion of Outlook Coop Training Institute. To be granted credit transfer the student must provide evidence of successful completion of the component, generally in the form of a training certificate or transcript. Where credit transfer is granted, no training needs to take place in that component of the program.

Only 50% of the total amount of credits from the selected full course of studies may be achieved through recognition and accreditation prior to learning.

8. ACCESSING RPL

Outlook Coop Training Institute commits itself that procedures related to access to RPL will

- Be learner centred, fair and fully respect the privacy of the individual
- Take into account of Equality and Diversity issues
- Be accessible and flexible

a. Orientation

Prospective candidates should make their claims at least one month prior to the start of the course.

b. Application Process

- i. Applications for RPL are administered by the Programme Coordinator and prospective applicants should seek immediate guidance prior to applying.
- ii. Prospective course participants requesting any form of RPL can apply through the following forms which can be accessed through these links: (insert link to application)
- iii. All evidence of prior learning must be uploaded as part of the application. An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to the candidate.
- iv. All claimed work experience must be relevant to the qualification and should be within the last ten years of the date of application. Any statements of service must be presented on official company letterheads providing contact details of the employer.
- v. If necessary, an interview will be held where the applicant may provide additional evidence of the relevant competencies and skills.
- vi. Outcomes of all applications will be kept within a database while copies of the submission documents will be preserved within the applicant's file.
- vii. Applicants will be informed of the decision within fifteen working days.

c. Fees

Applications for RPL are subject to a processing fee of Eur25. The fee for revision of the RPL assessment is an additional Eur25.

9. SUPPORT FOR CANDIDATES

a. Guidance and Information Services

The Outlook Coop Training Centre will strive to provide support and guidance to all learners wishing to access training through RPL. Staff at the institute who will assist learners in the process will receive the necessary training to ensure transparency, fairness and equity throughout.

Candidates are urged to contact the institute's Course Coordinator or the Administration Office for information services.

b. Identification of Acceptable Evidence

A portfolio of evidence must be compiled and submitted together with the RPL application. This should include the following documents:

- A most recent and detailed CV
- ID card (copy of)
- Employment history (Jobs Plus)
- Any formal certificates or CPD awards
- Letter/s of Reference
- Description of duties performed
- Details related to any voluntary work
- Samples of work e.g. articles, prepared reports, plans
- Proof of any internship or apprenticeship programmes attended
- Anything else relevant to the modules.

Documentary evidence provided to support a claim needs to be:

Valid: Documents and evidence provided for prior learning must match the appropriate academic level as well as the learning outcomes required by the relevant programme.

Sufficient: Documentation must in the form of a completed portfolio for assessment purposes

Current: Submitted evidence should be up to date and in line with current knowledge, skills and practices

Authentic: The veracity of the documentation provided must be signed and submitted with the formal application

Reliable: Learning achieved throughout all concepts of learning must be relevant to the programme of studies.

10. ASSESSING RPL CLAIMS

a. Assessment of Evidence

Assessors / technical experts identified by the Outlook Coop Training Institute will be familiar with the programme of study to which the application relates. The assessor/ /technical expert will have an understanding of the level of knowledge and the kind of skills that are required of applicants admitted to programme of studies (through the conventional route).

Applicants should be aware that the evidence that they submit to support their application shall be assessed against learning outcomes of study unit descriptors provided by the Outlook Coop Training Institute.

Applicants may also be asked to provide additional evidence to support their claim. Oral examinations / interviews shall be conducted by at least 2 assessors.

b. Quality Assurance of RPL Decisions

Outlook Coop Training Institute will safeguard the quality standards of its awards by ensuring that:

- The assessment of prior learning for **Credit Transfer** is evidence-based and ensures that the learning outcomes have been met
- The assessment of prior learning for admission to a **Credit Award** is evidence-based and questions the applicant's competency and readiness to follow the programme.
- Assessors engaged in the process must have the appropriate expertise in order to support the RPL procedures.
- All evidence of RPL is retained for the purpose of External Quality Assurance by the MFHEA.
- Any RPL credit granted by another institution is not transferable to this institute.
- Standards for the assessment of RPL are regularly reviewed and monitored.

11. COMPLETING THE RPL PROCESS

a. Notification of Outcomes, Resubmission and Appeals

Outcomes of applications will be communicated to applicants within 15 days of submission of their application. The outcomes will be then recorded within the Institute's database, and a copy of the submission documents retained within the candidate's file as evidence of the assessment process.

Applicants dissatisfied with their outcome have the option to appeal against the decision by forwarding a written complaint to the RPL coordinator, and must do so within twenty (20) working days of the date nominated on the written notification.

Alternatively, additional evidence can be supplied by a specified date and a resubmission of the claim made.

Grounds for an appeal are limited to procedural error or breach of procedural fairness.

In both cases another assessor/technical expert will be appointed to re-assess the first assessment if such a need arises. The second assessment result shall be deemed as final and feedback shall be provided to the applicant in a detailed written report prepared by the appointed expert.

A minimal nominal fee is charged will be charged.

b. Recording and Certification

Any successful RPL claim and/or credit transfer will be formally recorded with the institute's database together with a clear description of how and where the RPL and/or credit transfer will be recorded on a candidate's certificate and transcript.

c. Monitoring RPL processes

Monitoring and reviewing of RPL processes are clearly defined and integrated within the Quality Assurance frameworks of the Outlook Coop Training Institute.

Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing RPL procedures include:

- Monitoring of number of learners undertaking RPL
- Success rate of RPL claims
- Time taken by learners to undertake RPL process
- Time spent by staff in supporting RPL process and managing the process of recognition
- Evaluation of the learner experience
- Evaluation of the staff experience
- Tracking of progress on part of learners who have made successful RPL claims for credit
- Evaluation of effectiveness any collaborative arrangements with other learning providers /learning partnerships/receiving institutions
- Reports from external assessors.

As with all documentation related to Quality Assurance, the records of the above mentioned procedures are available for scrutiny for appropriate external quality assurance.

References

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (2021) *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definition, Principles and Guidelines*

<https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Recognition-of-Prior-Learning-Guidelines-4.pdf>

MCAST (2021) *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy*

https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/DOC_358_CORP_REV_A_RECOGNITION-OF-PRIOR-LEARNING-RPL-POLICY.pdf

University of Malta *POLICY FOR THE RECOGNITION AND ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) AND FACILITATION OF ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY COURSES*

<https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/services/healthandwellness/sas/RPLPolicy.pdf>