



# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING Policy and Procedures

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VERSION 1.0

Mikael Anton Vassalli College

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

RPL is a formalised process through which credit may be awarded for learning undertaken prior to the commencement of a course offered by the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College (MAVC) for which a prospective course participant has applied or is registered. The appropriate use of RPL procedures avoids the necessity of duplicating previous learning, whilst ensuring that credit is only awarded when strong evidence is presented of successful achievement of the learning outcomes applicable to the level and content of the award for which the prospective learner has applied or is registered. Usually, only qualifications and experience acquired within ten years of the date of a RPL claim will be admissible as evidence to support a claim. Certain courses may apply a different time period to reflect professional and other regulatory requirements.

## 2. Policy Statement

### 2.1. The College

- will establish a transparent, equitable and evidence-based process for the assessment and determination of Prior Learning.
- may, at its discretion, set additional requirements for the Recognition of Prior Learning, including auditions, testing, interviews, practical demonstrations, and submission portfolio of evidence containing samples of work, a reflective narrative and testimony from somebody who can witness that learning took place.

### 2.2 The assessment of Prior Learning

For the purposes of admission and/or Credit Transfer, the assessment of prior learning will be evidence-based, equitable and academically defensible. The precise nature of the evidence-based assessment may vary from discipline to discipline, and assessments will be made on the merit of each individual case.

## 3. Principles

RPL is a form of assessment and therefore the policy and procedures in place for RPL are compliant with the College's principles and procedures for assessment (Refer to [Mikiel Anton Vassalli College | Mikiel Anton Vassalli College \(gov.mt\)](https://mavc.gov.mt) );

RPL is a judgement about a course participant's ability to study at a particular level taking account of their previous study and experience;

The assessment of an RPL claim will:

- Involve robust, academic judgement;
- Take a holistic approach to the course participant's experience, previous study and intended award;

- Recognise the need for flexible consideration of each aspect of the intended award in the light of previous study or experience;

An RPL claim based on learning completed prior to admission to any of the College's courses should be submitted at least one (1) month prior to the start of the course so that the claim can be judged, and any credit awarded, before the course commences;

Only RPL claims based on learning completed whilst undertaking a course offered by the College, but that is not a part of that course, will be considered once a course has commenced;

The respective school administration teams will review RPL claims and provide a moderation process to ensure academic integrity and institutional consistency. Should the need arise, the respective school leader will escalate the matter to the MAVC Board of Studies in order to evaluate complex cases. The decision issued by The Head of College Network will be communicated to the prospective learner in writing and is considered to be final.

## 4. General Guidelines

### 4.1 The award of credit

4.1.1 RPL Credit should be awarded in specified amounts at an identified level.

4.1.2 Credit may be awarded where prior learning matches, in terms of level, volume and content, the learning outcomes of a course or module.

4.1.3 There is no difference between certificated (formal learning) and uncertificated learning (Informal and Non-Formal Learning) in the amount of credit that can be claimed towards an award.

4.1.4 Where a programme is not credit-rated or modularised, there must be clear identification of the specific elements of the programme against which the prior learning is to be matched.

### 4.2 Limitations to the award of credit

4.2.1 The minimum claim allowable under the RPL Scheme is equal to the smallest module within any given programme.

4.2.2 The maximum credit for RPL which can be offered is normally one third of any given programme.

### 4.3 Instances where RPL credit can and cannot be awarded

4.3.1 Where claims are made for exemption, they should be against whole modules or components of a programme. Claims cannot be made against part of modules.

4.3.2 RPL credit cannot be awarded for any module which comprises a practicum/practice placement, internship in industry (micro placement) and a final project or dissertation. RPL credit cannot be awarded where professional or statutory body requirements are not met.

4.3.3 The entry requirements of each course will specify whether it will accept RPL as an entry requirement or whether part of the entry requirements can be fulfilled through RPL.

### 4.4 The timing of a claim

4.4.1 RPL claims should be made at least one (1) month prior to the start of the course. This clause does not apply to RPL (formal) claims related to stand-alone modules completed with MAVC.

4.4.2 An RPL application for exemption can be made once a potential course participant has demonstrated that they are likely to meet the admissions criteria for a programme.

#### 4.5 Time limit for process

4.5.1 The use of RPL does not alter the admissions process for the programme. Deadlines for acceptance of an offer of a place will not be extended to accommodate the timing of RPL assessment decisions. Once a full application documenting the claim has been received, the prospective course participant will normally receive the decision within fifteen (15) working days.

## 5. Formal (Certificated) Learning

### 5.1. Formal learning

Formal learning is always organised and structured and has learning objectives. It is part of structured programme that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification undertaken at an institution. From the prospective course participant's standpoint, it is always intentional: i.e. the prospective course participant's explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences. Typical examples are learning that takes place within the initial education and training system or workplace training arranged by the employer.

5.1.1. Examples of officially accredited qualifications include:

- Awards/Qualifications pegged at the respective MQF/EQF Level
- Undergraduate Certificates
- Undergraduate Diploma
- Undergraduate Higher Diplomas
- Bachelor's degrees
- Postgraduate Certificate
- Postgraduate Diploma
- Master's Degree

### 5.2. Evidence of Formal Learning

5.2.1 To be assessed for credit based on formal learning, the prospective course participant will need to supply the following items:

- Transcripts - A copy of prospective course participant's official transcripts for all relevant previous studies, including any currently enrolled units he/she intends to complete prior to commencing the course/module at MAVC. The prospective course participant is advised to contact his/her previous institution to obtain a copy of the official transcripts.
- Unit Outlines - Detailed unit guides or outlines (or course syllabi) must be provided for each unit on the transcript the prospective course participant wishes to have assessed for credit. Unit guides should normally include information on the course content covered, learning outcomes, required readings, and assessment methods.

- Note: Supporting documents in a language other than English must be accompanied by a certified English translation.

### 5.3 RPL assessment criteria

5.3.1 In assessing the prospective course participant's prior learning, consideration is given to the following currency and relevancy criteria:

- Currency - Prior formal learning attained within ten years of the date of application for credit will generally be considered current;
- Relevancy - Prior formal learning will be considered relevant where there is evidence to demonstrate that the prospective course participant:
  - has achieved a quality and standard of learning at an appropriate level;
  - has attained the learning outcomes of a specific unit or units and/or stage of the study programme;
  - prior learning is assessed as equivalent in discipline content, depth and breadth.

### 5.4 Assessment of Overseas Qualifications

5.4.1 Qualifications equivalent to the required MQF Level as recognized by the Malta Qualification Information Centre (MQRIC) may be considered. The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) is the competent body within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) that recognises qualifications against the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). It provides recognition and comparability of both academic and vocational qualifications, using both the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to provide recognition advice on both local and international qualifications.

## 6. Informal and Non-Formal Learning

### 6.1. Informal Learning

Informal learning is never organised, has no set objective in terms of learning outcomes and is never intentional from the prospective course participant's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience. The idea is that the simple fact of existing constantly exposes the individual to learning situations, at work, at home or during leisure time for instance. This definition, with a few exceptions also meets with a fair degree of consensus.

### 6.2. Non-formal Learning

Non-formal learning is rather organised and can have learning objectives. The advantage of the intermediate concept lies in the fact that such learning may occur at the initiative of the individual but also happens as a by-product of more organised activities, whether the activities themselves have learning objectives. Non-formal learning gives some flexibility between formal and informal

learning, which must be strictly defined to be operational, by being mutually exclusive, and avoid overlap.

### 6.3. Evidence of Informal / Non-formal Learning

6.3.1. In order to obtain entry or credit at MAVC based on informal or non-formal learning, a statement and documentary evidence must be provided to support the claim being made.

6.3.2. Evidence needs to document the prior learning and demonstrate either:

- A standard of learning required for admission to prospective course participant's specified study programme and/or
- Achievement of the specific learning outcomes of the unit(s) for which credit is sought.

6.3.3. Some examples of documentary evidence for informal and non-formal learning include:

- Certificates and statements of attainment from courses sponsored by employers or professional bodies, including information about the course of study;
- A Process Portfolio documenting the artist's art-making journey. It should display the initial research into thematic ideas and direction for artworks; engagement with different media and techniques; documentation of process; reflections on artists & artworks; and the development & refinement of ideas;
- Training records which should include a combination of significant learning forms that can supplement the professional acumen of the prospective course participant. These could include evidence of any of the following; on-the-job training (while being employed); participation in projects as guided by previous employer; participation in competitions related to the course applied for; attendance of courses related to the course applied for on a voluntary basis; and attendance of information sessions regarding innovative practices;
- Evidence of involvement in workforce or community activities (through informal and non-formal learning that took place aggregately not more than ten years prior to the commencement of the course) and which are directly related and comparable to the selected course;
- Employment history and employment position descriptions;
- Results from other non-accredited courses from various education and training providers (eg. MOOCs), including outlines of any units studied;
- Letters of reference from employers, including direct supervisors, verifying the prospective course participant's knowledge, skills and experience;
- Copies of documents you have completed as part of the prospective course participant's work;

- Details of community activities involving significant responsibilities;
- Samples, portfolios, photographs or videos of the prospective course participant's work that are related to the credit sought and, ideally, these should be accompanied by a description sheet.

6.3.4. In some cases, prospective course participants may be required to perform a challenge test to further demonstrate their prior learning.

#### 6.4. RPL assessment criteria

- Currency - Prior formal learning attained within ten years of the date of application for credit will generally be considered current;
- Relevancy for admission - Prior informal/non-formal learning will be considered relevant for admission where:
  - There is evidence to demonstrate that the prospective course participant has achieved a standard of learning which is comparable to the admission requirements of the selected course/level;
  - The prospective course participant demonstrates competency and readiness for further studies.
- Relevancy for credit - Prior formal learning will be considered relevant where there is evidence to demonstrate that:
  - The prospective course participant has achieved a quality and standard of learning equivalent to tertiary studies at an appropriate level;
  - The prospective course participant has attained the learning outcomes of a specific unit or units and/or stage of the study programme;
  - The prospective course participant's prior learning is assessed as equivalent in discipline content, depth and breadth.

### 7. Application Procedure

7.1. Applications for Recognition of Prior Learning are administered by the respective school administration. Prospective course participants are encouraged to discuss any prior learning they may have with the respective school administration who can provide further guidance if needed in relation to the process shown below.

7.2. Prospective course participants should think carefully about what expertise has been acquired over time, in particular whether they have 'depth' of knowledge and/or strong skills in specific areas.

7.3. Prospective course participants requesting for Recognition of Prior Learning (Certified) and Recognition of Prior Learning (Non-formal/Informal) will be required to send an email to the school leader, providing evidence of prior learning as explained in clause 6 above. The school administration will also provide additional guidance if needed.



▪ Note: It is expected that applications will occur at the time of admission, or before commencement of the course. In exceptional cases when it is necessary to apply after commencement of the subject, it should be no later than the end of the first week of that course.

7.4. All evidence must be in the English language.

7.5. The RPL assessment will include the verification of the currency, relevance, and authenticity of the documents submitted. Overseas and domestic academic qualifications presented for an application for course credit will be authenticated:

- Original documents (i.e. award and transcript of results) being provided by the applicant to the school administration;
- Copies of the original documents (i.e. award and transcript of results) being provided by the applicant which have been verified as a true copy of the original documents.

7.6. Should the school administration suspect that the academic document presented has been altered or fraudulently created, contact will be made with the Board of Studies to validate the claims of the applicant.

7.7. All claimed work experience must be relevant to the qualification and should be within the last ten years of the date of application. Statements of Service provided must be on official company letterhead, providing contact details of the employer. Past and current employers are contacted to verify applicable work experience on a case-by-case basis.

7.8. This evidence will be assessed, and if necessary, an audition/interview will be held at which the applicant may provide additional evidence of the relevant competencies or demonstrate the relevant skills. For overseas applicants or others not living within reasonable travel distance to the respective school, this audition/interview may be conducted online and/or demonstration given after arrival. In such circumstances, the applicant must have provided the respective school administration with certified true copies of the supportive evidence prior to the online audition/interview commencing.

7.9. After this assessment procedure, the respective school administration will provide written notification within two (2) weeks explaining the units for which credit has been granted, and those which have been declined and why.

7.10. If the prospective course participant is dissatisfied with the outcome, he/she has the option to appeal against the decision but 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.

7.11. The outcomes of the application will be recorded within the respective school's database, and a copy of the submission documents retained within the applicant's file as evidence of the assessment process.

## 8. Time Limits

8.1. Applications for credit against previous Formal learning will normally be assessed within ten (10) working days providing all necessary documents have been submitted. A longer period may be required where full assessment is required.

8.2. Applications for Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning will normally be assessed within twenty (20) working days. A longer period may be required where full assessment is required.

## 9. Quality Assurance

9.1. MAVC will safeguard the quality of its awards by ensuring that:

- The assessment of Prior Learning for admission to an award/qualification is evidence-based and questions the applicant's competency and readiness for further studies;
- The assessment of Prior Learning for Credit Transfer is evidence-based, and ensures that the learning outcomes have been met;
- Credit on the basis of prior Formal Learning is only granted for completed modules/units where the final grade is a Pass, or equivalent grade, and higher;
- Standards for the assessment of Prior Learning are regularly reviewed and monitored by the MAVC's Board of Studies.

## 10. Appeals

10.1. A prospective course participant may appeal a decision regarding the assessment of Prior Learning for the purpose of admission and/or Credit Transfer.

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

10.3. Appeals will be managed through the Board of Studies and are to be made in accordance with the Appeals Policy and Procedures. (ref. MAVC IQA, page28 clause 4.20)

## Appendix A - Terminology

### **Award**

An Award refers to the title of certification of learning achieved through courses which do not have the required number of credits at the specific MQF level to be considered a qualification. These are more commonly known as “short courses”.

### **Credit Transfer**

When learner provide their academic transcript(s) which lists the course taken, grade, and other attributes from each institution they attended when applying for enrollment. Each transcript and the listed courses are tentatively evaluated to see if any of the courses taken satisfy the requirements of the receiving institution.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

- The recognition of learning that has previously been assessed and certificated by an education provider; and
- The recognition of prior learning gained through relevant experience which can be evaluated.

### **Formal Learning**

Formal learning takes place through a structured programme of learning delivered by a registered education provider, and which leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification. This achievement is generally certified.

### **Informal Learning**

Informal learning is usually gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. It is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

### **Non-Formal Learning**

Non-formal learning takes place through a structured programme of learning but does not directly lead to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.