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Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Process

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Continuous Improvement

Procedures are meant to be 'living' documents that need to be applied, executed, and maintained. If the procedure does not reflect the current, correct work practice, it needs to be updated. Please contact us on: +356 2145 6310

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1. Purpose and Scope

Individuals gain knowledge and skills through various processes and environments. The workplace also offers the opportunity for individuals to apply knowledge and skills and acquire competences that are not necessarily acquired through formal learning. Within this context, the recognition of prior learning (RPL), requires educational entities to develop and implement robust processes for the recognition of prior learning.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a formalised process of recognising learning obtained through formal certified, non-formal and informal experiential learning. Through RPL learners can gain recognition for knowledge, understanding, skills and competences that they already possess. Such recognition of learning can include learning which has previously been assessed and certified by an education provider; and other learning gained through workplaces and experiences, life and personal interests.

The College's RPL is based on a framework which aims to create learning pathways and mobility to lifelong learners. The concept the College is using to address RPL is that of widening access to education and training and to enhance the qualification status of adult learners. RPL at the College is seen as a comparison of the previous learning and experience of the learner, in whatever learning mode it was obtained, against the learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competences needed, meeting the entry requirements for acceptance to a specific course. The purpose of this document is to provide detailed information regarding RPL Policy and Procedures being implemented at the College during an admission process.

The RPL process at IDEA College is administered by the Admissions Board (the Registrar, Director of Curriculum, Director of Studies and a Technical Expert) with the scope of:

- a) admission to a formal qualification or award, or;
- b) gaining exemptions to components (e.g. practice placements for applicants who show evidence of extensive hours of practice or are already practising in the role, in which case their work hours will be taken into consideration) or parts of a formal qualification or award.

***RPL for the scope of gaining exemptions to components shall not apply for Qualifications regulated by a professional body (such as the Nursing Council or the Council for the Teaching Profession) which require an established minimum number of practice hours in local context to deem candidates "fit to practice"; or when ten years would have elapsed since the said certified learning has taken place.**

This policy aims to guide the College in managing the process of recognition and accreditation of prior learning by providing a set of key features and guidelines intended to ensure consistency and transparency in the application of the principles of RPL. It also applies to prospective students applying for enrolment on an IDEA College programme of studies and requesting RPL as part of their admissions process.

2. Definitions

Formal Certified Learning	Formal certified learning refers to a type of learning in which the goals and objectives are defined in curriculum and formal syllabus. Formal certified learning examples of formal learning include but not limited to classroom instruction, web-based training, learning courses, workshops, seminars
Informal Experiential Learning	Experiential learning helps individuals to generate understanding and transfer knowledge in a manner different from the traditional didactic method of teaching where teachers simply transfer knowledge upon their students. Experiential learning allows students to engage their own experiences and reflect upon those experiences to further synthesize and analyse information
Non-formal Learning	Non-formal learning is learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations.
Credits	One Credit is considered to be equivalent to a workload of 25 hours of learning. The term workload refers to an estimation of the time an individual typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements and individual study required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments. In line with European tools, credits in general education and Higher education can be called The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Credits in vocational education can be called The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). Both ECTS and ECVET in Malta are equivalent to 25 hours of learning. This document refers to credits, with the understanding that these may be called either ECTS or ECVET.
Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes are the specific objectives of a programme or study unit / module. They describe what a student should know, understand, or be able to do and develop at the end of the programme or study unit.

3. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Registrar and the Admissions Board to read, understand and follow this policy and process.

It is the responsibility of Registrar to provide feedback to the Director of Quality and Curriculum and the Quality Assurance Section who monitor and evaluate this process according to the IDEA College Audit Plan.

4. Conditions and Eligibility

This RPL policy is intended to cover all programmes offered at IDEA College which go from MQF Level 4 to MQF Level 7. This RPL policy is solely intended for individuals aiming to follow a formal and accredited programme offered by IDEA College, and is subject to a number of conditions as stipulated below:

- 4.1 The recognition of prior learning only applies to competences gained through formal programmes (accredited and recognized by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority) and/or workplace learning (backed by evidence of declared employment).
- 4.2 Individuals will be required to submit an application for evaluation given they satisfy conditions for eligibility which include:
 - a. Evidence of work experience in related field
 - b. Interest to upskill through formal methods at IDEA College
 - c. assent to sit for additional competency-based tests/evaluation as part of the RPL process
- 4.3 Exemptions shall only be approved for whole Units and not for individual elements of assessment within a Unit.
- 4.4 RPL will be offered for admission to a formal qualification or award **but not** for exemption to components of the qualification (e.g, practice placement hours will have to be covered as part of their studies as stipulated by the Professional Board) in the case of:
 - a) a regulated professional accreditation that the programme of study may offer, or;
 - b) programmes that require a minimum number of practice hours to deem candidates “fit to practice” (and where this is the case it should be made clear in the policy document), or;
 - c) ten years have elapsed since the said certified learning has taken place
- 4.5 The maximum number of credits that may be gained as a result of the RPL process at IDEA College will not exceed 50% of the qualification/award chosen by the individual for formal learning.
- 4.6 Any credits gained through the RPL process can only be given to learners once all the programme of study is completed.

- 4.7 Granted exemptions will be clearly identified on a student's transcript upon successful completion of the Qualification and Award and will be indicated as 'Exempted by RPL'. Marks for the 'Exempted by RPL' modules will be a calculated average of the marks obtained on the mapped modules according to the original transcript. The average mark will be assigned to each 'Exempted by RPL module' and added to the rest of the marks for the purpose of the overall classification of the final grade,
- 4.8 Following review of particular cases, the Admissions Board may reserve the right to consider exemptions beyond those stipulated in the limitations listed above.

5. Process for RPL

All applications for enrolment on programmes of studies are received by the Office of the Registrar who receive application through an email registrar@ideamalta.com available on the website. Upon vetting of applications, the team establishes which applications need RPL to access a course of study and which applications may benefit from RPL for exemption. In the case of RPL for access no formal application form is required as all applications for courses are received by the Registrar and processed through the Admissions Board where enrolment decisions are taken by the same Board according to RPL entry requirements established in the Programme of Studies accredited by MFHEA.

In the case of RPL for exemptions a formal application form is required. The process for RPL consists of an individualized process and is structured into four distinct phases, namely [1] Guidance and Formal Application, [2] Evidence and Initial Evaluation, [3] Interview and Competency-based Mapping and [4] Results and Communications. The four phases are explained in the table below.

Phase	Task Description
1: Guidance and Formal Application	During this phase, potential applicants are guided by the Office of the Registrar through the process for RPL and all conditions of eligibility (as defined in section 4 of this policy) are explained. Application Forms and information about RPL will be found on the IDEA College Website. Applicants are then requested to fill in an application form to provide and declare details of formal qualifications/awards and competences through workplace learning.
2: Evidence and Initial Evaluation	The application is processed by a designated team to check that all the required details submitted by the individual are correct and valid. Once the application has been validated, the applicant is requested to provide specific evidence (which may include certificates, portfolios, written and signed declarations by employers, projects and other work-related activity, any other documents deemed pertinent for the scope of RPL). An initial evaluation is conducted by the Admissions Board with the objective of analysing the evidence provided by

	<p>the applicant. Evaluations shall be conducted on the basis of the below criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Evidence presented suitably matches the learning claimed.</i> 2. <i>Sufficient evidence is provided to demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed</i> 3. <i>Presented evidence clearly relates to the applicants' own efforts and achievements</i> 4. <i>Evidence presented clearly relates to current learning in the respective vocational sector</i>
<p>3: Interview and Competency-based Mapping</p>	<p>The Admissions Board interviews applicant to ensure that the results of the analysis conducted in the initial evaluation is valid and to verify specific competences that the applicant claims to possess.</p> <p>Applicant may also be subjected to competency-based tests if the results of the interview are not sufficient to ensure validity.</p> <p>IEB proceeds to map competences acquired by applicant (through formal and workplace learning) with the intended learning outcomes of the specific programme to determine eligibility for admissions and/or the amount of credits that may be recognized for prior learning according to parameters outlined in section 2 of this document.</p>
<p>4: Results and Communications</p>	<p>The results of the competency-based mapping are transferred to information management system of IDEA College and stored under the direction and control of the Registrar and the Directors of Study. Results are communicated by the Registrar with applicant, management staff and lecturing team on the formal programme of study.</p> <p>Outcomes of the evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full acceptance of the claim as entry requirements onto a programme of study; • full acceptance of a claim for advanced entry (exemption) to a programme of study; • partial acceptance of the claim for exemption of up to 50% of the ECTS; • a request for resubmission of a claim including further evidence; • failure of claim with recommendations for alternative paths; • failure of the claim. <p>The confirmation or otherwise of exemption will be confirmed in writing by the Office of the Registrar within 30 working days of receipt of the application.</p>

6. Appeals against Exemption decisions

Where, requests for exemption are not upheld the student shall have the right to appeal under the following terms, to the IDEA College Registrar:

- 6.1 The student may request a review of the exemption decision by sending an email to the IDEA College Registrar on registrar@ideamalta.com.
- 6.2 Any appeals to the decision need to be supported by further additional documentation, as necessary.
- 6.3 Appeals to the decision may be lodged within 10 working days of the decision communicated in writing.

7. Guidance and Support to Students

- 7.1 Students seeking exemptions shall be assisted by the office of the Registrar as necessary.
- 7.2 The policy document, including the link to the application form shall be made available to students on the IDEA College website.

8. Monitoring and Quality Assurance arrangements

- 8.1 Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of RPL Policy lies initially with the Registrar.
- 8.2 Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of this process lies with the IDEA Quality Assurance Department.

9. Schedule of Fees

9.1 All requests for Recognition of Prior Learning are subject to the following fees (as per table below):

9.2 RPL Processing Fee (non-refundable)

	RPL for Access	RPL for Exemption on credits
1 st Stage	No fees	No fees
2 nd stage processing fee	N/A	Level 5 units - Euros 50 per ECTS
		Level 6 units - Euros 50 per ECTS
		Level 7 units – Euros 100 per ECTS
<p>Disclaimer:</p> <p>a. Fees are not applicable for exemption requests on IDEA College units achieved through another same-level IDEA College programme;</p> <p>b. RPL fees may change on an annual basis</p>		

9.3 Upon receipt of the application, IDEA College will issue the applicants with an invoice for the RPL Processing Fee (Stage 2, table in 9.1 refers) which fee the applicant will be expected to pay in order to initiate the RPL process.

10. Supporting Documents

Doc_075_22 Admissions Policy and Procedure

FRM 104_24 Recognition Of Prior Learning (RPL) Application Form

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