



UNIVERSITY OF
GIBRALTAR

Academic Credit for Prior Learning

Policy and Procedure

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1. PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 The University of Gibraltar (the University) strives to recognise and award credit for relevant prior learning in cases where such prior learning satisfies the learning outcomes for one or more modules of a University programme of study on which a student is, or has applied to be, registered¹.
- 1.2 The University may recognise (transfer) credit awarded by another higher education provider as part of a defined academic programme framework where the volumes and levels of prior learning are applicable to a programme of study being (or to be) undertaken at the University.
- 1.3 The University may also recognise and award credit for prior learning achieved outside such a framework, provided the volume(s), levels(s) and learning outcomes are applicable to a programme of study being (or to be) undertaken at the University.
- 1.4 The recognition of and award of credit for prior learning is a formal process. The University is committed to encouraging students to take up the opportunity for recognition of and award of credit for prior learning and to supporting applicants throughout the application process. It is similarly committed to fairness and transparency in the decision-making process.
- 1.5 Determining applications for prior learning is an evidenced-based process through which applicants submit their evidence. The University applies four criteria in its consideration of this evidence.
 - Relevance (evidence supports the learning claimed).
 - Sufficiency (evidence is sufficient to demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed).
 - Authenticity (evidence clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and achievements)
 - Currency (evidence demonstrates that the learning is sufficiently up-to-date).
- 1.6 The University will recognise relevant prior learning by a student provided it is satisfied that the volume(s), level(s) and learning outcomes are equivalent to those achieved by studying module(s) in the University's programme of study.
- 1.7 The *de facto* consequence of recognition of prior learning is that the student secures exemption from (but credit for) specified module(s) in the University's programme of study.
- 1.8 The University considers the recognition of relevant prior learning to be valuable to both the student and the University in so much as it:
 - avoids unnecessary duplication of learning on the part of the student;
 - provides exemption from specific module(s) and thereby enables the student to access the programme at a later stage and/or complete it in less study time than it would otherwise take;
 - quality assures that prior learning is equivalent to the volume(s), level(s) and learning outcomes defined by the University for the purpose of awarding an academic qualification of the University.

¹ In this Policy and Procedure, the term student includes a student registered at the University and an applicant seeking or intending to register as a student of the University.

2. TYPES of PRIOR LEARNING

This policy and procedure identifies three types of prior learning. These are the types of prior learning for which recognition is most usually sought.

2.1 Prior learning in an academic credit framework

- 2.1.1 In cases where the prior learning has been completed at one or more other higher education institute(s) and awarded by another degree-awarding body which uses a learning credit framework (e.g., credits as used in the UK, ECTS), recognition of prior learning applicable to the programme of study at the University will normally be considered and recognised on the basis of the transcript(s) or corresponding authentication(s) issued by other higher education institute(s).
- 2.1.2 The student is required to submit, as part of the claim, evidence in the form of the official transcript(s) or equivalent document(s) from other higher education institute(s) of the successful completion of module(s) and of their credit value in relation to the University module(s) for which recognition (and from which exemption) is sought.
- 2.1.3 The student is also required to demonstrate that the volume(s), level(s) and learning outcomes of those module(s) correspond to those of the University module(s) from which exemption is sought.

2.2 Certificated Prior Learning

- 2.2.1 Certificated prior learning is that for which the student has been awarded a diploma or formal statement confirming satisfactory completion of a course of study outside an academic credit framework but nevertheless at a higher education level.
- 2.2.2 In order to claim recognition for this prior learning, the student is required to submit, as part of the claim, the diploma or statement along with argumentation and/or evidence that the prior learning is equivalent to the volume(s), level(s) and learning outcomes for which he/she is claiming recognition of this prior learning.

2.3 Experiential Prior Learning

- 2.3.1 Experiential prior learning is that derived from experience, most usually (but not exclusively) in the workplace; as such it is learning outside a formal or defined higher education programme of study.
- 2.3.2 In order to claim recognition for this prior learning, the claimant is required to present alternative documentary evidence that the prior learning is equivalent to the volume(s), level(s) and learning outcomes for which he/she is claiming recognition of prior learning.

3. POLICY²

- 3.1 The University is responsible for the academic standards of all academic credit awarded in its name.
- 3.2 Whilst the University encourages and supports the recognition of prior learning, the responsibility to apply for this rests with the student. A student may submit a claim for recognition of prior learning on the proforma prescribed by the University; the completed proforma must be accompanied by supporting evidential documentation.
- 3.3 The University is responsible for publishing its policy and procedure on submitting claims for the recognition of prior learning, for providing advice to applicants and potential applicants about the policy and procedure (including deadlines for applying, the process of assessment, the provision of feedback and the right of appeal) and about the evidence likely to be required in support of each type of claim.
- 3.4 A claim and possible recognition of prior learning applies only to the programme of study on which the student is, or is applying to be, registered.
- 3.5 A claim can be made only in respect of whole modules (i.e., not in respect of parts of modules).
- 3.6 A claim will only be considered for demonstrable learning (i.e., not for time taken) related to specific module(s).
- 3.7 A claim will only be considered for prior learning that is demonstrably current (i.e., up-to-date in relation to the programme of study on which the student is, or has applied to be, registered) with an upper limit of prior learning within the preceding five years.
- 3.8 The University will exercise due diligence in considering claims for prior learning in that:
 - each claim will be considered by an Accreditation Panel appointed by, and responsible to, the University's Examinations Committee (a sub-committee of its Academic Board);
 - the Accreditation Panel will include, or seek the advice of, University moderators and/or external scrutineers;
 - an external member of the Examinations Committee will have oversight of and monitor the claims consideration process of Accreditation Panel(s) but will not act as a member.
- 3.9 The Accreditation Panel will be convened in response to claim(s) submitted and will consider claim(s) in a timely fashion such that there is no unnecessary delay in determining recognition of and/or credit for prior learning.
- 3.10 The Accreditation Panel will accept, partially accept, or reject the claim and report its decision to the Registrar, who is responsible for recording the decision, informing the student and informing the student's Programme Coordinator; the student's Programme Coordinator is responsible for implementing exemption(s) implicit in the recognition of or credit for prior learning.
- 3.11 A student may appeal against the decision of the Accreditation Panel.

² This policy has been informed by the QAA's Academic Credit in Higher Education in England – an Introduction (2009) and its UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6, Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning; it is benchmarked against the corresponding policies and procedures of Bolton, Gloucestershire, and Sheffield universities.

3.12 Recognition of prior learning will not in itself constitute the award of a University qualification; but rather credit that can count towards such a qualification. The volume of recognition of prior learning will not exceed 50% of the credits required for the award of a qualification of the University; and the volume of credit awarded for prior certificated and/or experiential prior learning will not exceed 33% of the credits required for the award of a qualification of the University. The recognition and credit limits per programme are shown in Table 1.

3.13 Recognition of prior learning will be ungraded. As such, it does not contribute to the classification of the qualification of the University in cases where the qualification is classified; such classification will be based only on grades achieved in the modules studied at and examined by the University.

3.14 Recognition of prior learning used towards the award of a qualification of the University will be recorded in the qualification transcript and further documented in a supplement to it.

3.15 The University reserves the right to charge a fee for conducting its recognition and accreditation process. The claimant will be advised, at the earliest possible stage in the process, if there will be a fee and how much. Should the claimant then wish not to proceed, the process will stop and no fee will be charged.

TABLE 1: Recognition of prior learning; limits per programme

Award	FHEQ level(s)	Total credits as used in the UK for award at the University of Gibraltar	Limit of recognition of credits as used in the UK (a) from other higher education institute (b)	Limit of accreditation for certificated and/or experiential prior learning (2)
Integrated Masters	4-7	480	180 (c)	120 (d)
Bachelor's degree (with honours)	4-6	360	180 (c)	120 (d)
Master's degree	7	180	90	60
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	60	60
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	30	30

- a) ECTS credits are also recognised with the conversion factor: 1 ECTS credit = 2 credits as used in the UK
- b) For combinations of recognition (credit transfer) and accreditation of certificated and/or experiential prior learning, the recognition limit applies; but the amount accredited for certificated and/or experiential prior learning may not exceed the specified limit in the certificated and/or experiential prior learning category.
- c) Whilst recognition may be claimed for prior learning that was at a higher level than level 5, credit will only be applied against module(s) at level 4 or 5 in the programme of study for which the claim is made.
- d) Whilst accreditation may be claimed for prior learning evidenced to be at a higher level than level 4, accreditation will only be applied against module(s) at level 4 in the programme of study for which the claim is made.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 A student proposing to claim recognition for prior learning should discuss his/her proposed claim with the Programme Coordinator of the programme of study for which the student is (or is applying to be) registered. The Programme Coordinator will advise on the validity of the claim (including explaining the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which credit is claimed and the importance of evidencing the corresponding learning outcomes in the claim) and assist with the further development of the claim.

- 4.2 The student must complete the proforma Claim for Recognition of Prior Learning (Appendix 1) and submit this, along with the evidential documents required to support the claim, to the Registrar.
- 4.3 The Registrar will:
- acknowledge receipt;
 - send the claim proforma and evidential documents to the chair of the Examinations Committee.
- 4.4 The chair of the Examinations Committee will establish an Accreditation Panel comprising three or more suitably qualified persons to consider the claim.
- 4.5 Where the claim is seeking the recognition of prior learning in an academic framework or accreditation for higher education learning outside an academic framework, the Accreditation Panel will minimally comprise:
- the chair (a member of the Examinations Committee), whose role is to ensure that the quality standards of the University are maintained;
 - the Registrar, whose role is to act as University moderator and advise on credit transfer values of prior learning in an academic credit framework and corresponding values of certificated prior learning;
 - where the claim includes certificated prior learning with no credit transfer value, an external scrutineer familiar with the type of learning for which certification is supplied;
 - the Programme Coordinator, whose role it is to advise on the academic risk of accepting the claim.
- 4.6 Where the claim is seeking recognition of experiential prior learning, the Accreditation Panel will minimally comprise:
- the chair (a member of the Examinations Committee), whose role is to ensure that the quality standards of the University are maintained;
 - one or more external scrutineer(s) familiar with the specified experiential prior learning, whose role is to advise whether the level and learning outcomes of the experience are consistent with the level and learning outcomes of the module(s) against which the claim is made;
 - the Programme Coordinator, whose role it is to advise on the academic risk of accepting the claim.
- 4.7 Where the claim is more complicated (e.g., includes more than one type of prior learning, includes two types of experiential learning), the Accreditation Panel will be expanded accordingly.
- 4.8 The Chair of the Accreditation Panel must be satisfied that the Panel has the expertise to consider the claim; if the Chair requires the Panel to be expanded in order to discharge its obligations, the Chair may, with the permission of the Chair of the Examinations Committee, co-opt additional suitably qualified member(s) onto the Accreditation Panel.
- 4.9 Once established, the Chair will circulate to other members of the Accreditation Panel the claim proforma and evidential documents and convene a meeting of the Accreditation Panel.
- 4.10 At the conclusion of its meeting the Accreditation Panel will, with argumentation, either:
- grant the requested recognition of or accreditation for prior learning;
 - grant part of the requested recognition of or accreditation for prior learning and rejecting the remaining part;
 - reject the request for recognition of or accreditation for prior learning;
 - refer the claim to the Examinations Committee, citing the specific exceptional circumstances preventing the Accreditation Panel from granting or rejecting the requested recognition and/or accreditation.
- 4.11 The Chair of the Accreditation Panel will inform the Registrar and Chair of the Examinations Committee of its decision, with argumentation.

4.12 The Registrar will:

- record the decision on the student record;
- formally inform the student and Programme Coordinator of the decision;
- if recognition for prior learning is granted, record this in a way that will properly inform subsequent meeting(s) of the Examination Committee and facilitate its recording on the eventual transcript of the exit qualification awarded by the University to the student and on a supplement to it.

5. RIGHT of APPEAL

- 5.1 Should the student be dissatisfied with the decision, he/she has a once-only right of appeal and, should he/she decide to exercise this right, must do so **within 10 working days** of the date of the Registrar's written notification of the decision. (This deadline will be extended if the student is able to demonstrate that he/she did not receive the written Registrar's written notification within two days of its date.)
- 5.2 The ground for appeal should be a material procedural irregularity in the consideration of the claim; an appeal cannot be lodged on the grounds of additional evidence not submitted with the original claim, nor against academic judgement(s) made in considering the original claim.
- 5.3 An appeal may be made by completing the proforma in Appendix 2 and submitting it to the Registrar, who will record the appeal and forward it to the Chair of the Examinations Committee.
- 5.4 The Examinations Committee, at its next scheduled meeting or a specially convened extraordinary meeting, will consider the appeal along with the original claim and accompanying evidential documentation.
- 5.5 Where the Examinations Committee upholds the appeal, it will reconsider claim and evidential documentation and will, with argumentation, either:
- grant the requested recognition of and credit for prior learning;
 - grant part of the requested recognition of and credit for prior learning and reject the remaining part;
 - reject the request for recognition of and credit for prior learning.
- 5.6 The Chair of the Examinations Committee will inform the Registrar of its decision and the Registrar will inform, in writing, the student and Programme Coordinator.
- 5.7 The decision of the Examinations Committee is final.

6. MONITORING and REVIEW

- 6.1 The Registrar and external member of the Examinations Committee responsible for oversight of the recognition and accreditation process will provide annual report(s) on claims for recognition of prior learning to the Committee. The report will provide a quantitative and qualitative summary of the cases processed and actions taken.
- 6.2 The report(s) will highlight any trends in order to identify emerging institutional issues and to inform enhancement of the University's policy and procedure for recognition of prior learning.
- 6.3 Based on the report(s), the Examination Committee may amend this policy and guidance on recognition of prior learning.

APPENDIX 1: Claim for recognition of prior learning

Claim for recognition of prior learning	
Family name or surname	
First and other names	
University applicant or registration no.	
Programme of study	
Prior learning in an academic credit framework	
Claiming transfer of credits from other HE institute	Yes / No (If No, go to next section)
For which module(s) in programme of study	
Transcript or equivalent with credits attached	Yes / No
Certificated prior learning	
Claiming recognition of certificated prior learning	Yes / No (If No, go to next section)
For which module(s) in programme of study	
Certificate(s) attached	Yes / No
Evidence of level and learning outcomes attached	Yes / No
Experiential prior learning	
Claiming recognitions of experiential prior learning	Yes / No (If No, go to next section)
For which module(s) in programme of study	
Description of experiential learning attached	Yes / No
Evidence of level and learning outcomes attached	Yes / No
Claimant supporting checklist and argumentation	
Relevance (describe how evidence supports the learning claimed).	
Sufficiency (describe how evidence is sufficient to demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed).	
Authenticity (describe how evidence relates to the applicant's own efforts and achievements)	
Currency (provide assurance that the learning is up-to-date)	
Signed by claimant	
Signed by claimant	
Submitted to Registrar on (date)	
Evidence documentation attached	
Evidence documentation attached	Yes / No
Date submitted to Examinations Committee	
	

APPENDIX 2: Appeal against decision on recognition of prior learning

Appeal against decision on claim for recognition of prior learning	
Family name or surname	
First and other names	
University applicant or registration no.	
Programme of study	
Claim history	
Date of claim	
Date notified of Accreditation Panel decision	
Appeal and argumentation	
Ground and details of the substance of the appeal (describe the specifics of your appeal, e.g., exactly why you believe the correct procedure was not followed, or similar).	
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Signed by claimant	
Submitted to Registrar on (date)	
Registrar's submission to Examinations Committee	
Original claim form attached	Yes / No
Original evidence documentation attached	Yes / No
Notification of Accreditation Panel decision attached	Yes / No
Date submitted to Examinations Committee	
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