University Code of Practice

Credit Transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning

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Applications for exemptions to:	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Report exemptions to:	Academic Board

Summary/ Description:

This Code sets out the University's willingness to encourage applications for the recognition of prior learning (including credit transfer, prior certificated and prior experiential learning) where this is relevant to the programme (and its constituent modules). Prior learning relating to meeting or partially meeting the entry requirements for the programme are addressed under the Code on Recruitment, Selection and Admission (QH:C3).

The Code sets out the process for making an application, the principles which will govern it, and the general; and specific criteria which must be satisfied - including the limits on the number of credits which can benefit from recognition. Applications will be determined by a specifically established Recognition Panel comprising internal and external experts acting on behalf of the Board of

Examiners. Students have a right of appeal in the event that an application is rejected or only partially accepted in accordance with the University's Code on Academic Appeals.

Academic Quality and Standards Committee is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this Code and its implementation. To assist it achieve this the Committee will receive annual reports on all RPL cases during the preceding year.

Further Guidance

See the Introduction to the Quality Handbook (QH:A1) for further guidance and explanations of:

- how the Handbook is designed to work and what it covers and does not cover
- how it is structured
- the 'external reference points' and established practice which have informed each of the Codes
- key concepts and themes
- some suggestions for further reading
- a quick guide to each Code, including definitions and things to watch out for.

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by the University to enhance clarity involving the following terminology: must = mandatory should = advisable may = desirable. Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

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INTRODUCTION

Authority

1 The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this code of practice.

Scope of the Code

2 This Code applies to applications for recognition in respect of programmes classified by Academic Board as taught and which lead to the award of the University's higher education qualifications (as set out in the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1)).

3 It applies only to applications relating to prior learning which is relevant to the programme (or modules within it) which would justify exemption from one or more modules. It does not apply to prior learning which is sought to be used by an applicant to the University as part of meeting the entry requirements for the programme. The latter form is addressed in Code on Recruitment, Selection and Admission (QH:C3).

4 References to 'student' in this Code refer to both enrolled students and to applicants for one of the University's programmes as appropriate.

Application to collaborative provision

5 Unless specified by the Academic Board, this Code applies to all provision referred to in paragraph 3 whether that provision is delivered by the University or another approved provider in accordance with a formal legal agreement.

PRINCIPLES

6 The University is responsible for the academic standards of all academic credit awarded in its name.

7 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, registered.

8 The University may recognise (transfer) credit awarded by another higher education provider as part of a defined academic framework where the volume and level of prior learning is applicable to a programme of study being (or to be) undertaken at the University.

9 The University may also recognise 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.

10 The recognition of prior learning is a formal process. The University is committed to encouraging students to take up the opportunity for the recognition of prior learning and to

supporting applicants throughout the application process. It is similarly committed to fairness and transparency in the decision-making process.

11 Determining applications for prior learning is an evidenced-based process through which applicants submit their evidence. The University applies four general criteria in its consideration of this evidence.

(a) relevance (evidence supports the learning claimed)
(b) sufficiency (evidence is sufficient to demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed)
(c) authenticity (evidence clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and achievements)
(d) currency (evidence demonstrates that the learning is sufficiently up-to-date).

12 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 relevant University programme.

13 The de facto consequence of recognition of prior learning is that the student secures exemption from (but not credit for) specified module(s) in the University's programme of study.

14 The University considers the recognition of relevant prior learning to be valuable to both the student and the University in so much as it:

(a) avoids unnecessary duplication of learning on the part of the student
(b) 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
(c) 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.

TYPES OF PRIOR LEARNING

15 This Code identifies three types of prior learning. These are the types of prior learning for which recognition is most usually sought.

Prior learning in an academic credit framework (credit transfer)

16 In cases where the prior learning has been completed at one or more other higher education institution(s) and awarded by another degree-awarding body which uses an academic credit framework (e.g., credits as used in the UK or 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 issued by the relevant higher education institution(s).

17 The student is required to submit, as part of the claim, evidence in the form of the official transcript(s) or equivalent document(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.

18 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.

Recognition of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning

Prior certificated learning

19 Prior certificated learning is that for which the student has been awarded a certificate, diploma or formal statement confirming satisfactory completion of a course of study outside an academic credit framework but nevertheless at a higher education level.

20 In order to claim recognition for this prior learning, the student is required to submit, as part of the claim, the certificate, 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 the University module(s) against which recognition is being sought.

Prior experiential learning

21 Prior experiential 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. 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.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

General

22 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. A claim can be made only in respect of whole modules (i.e., not in respect of parts of modules). A claim will only be considered for demonstrable learning (i.e. not for time taken) related to specific module(s).

23 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.

Limitations on the volume and use of credit

24 The University sets two limitations on the recognition of prior learning towards its programmes. These limitations are designed to ensure that academic credit is not being

double counted (for example towards more than one award) and that each student undertakes enough of the University of Gibraltar's programme to merit being awarded a qualification of the University and therefore has enough connection with the University.

25 The two limitations are:

(a) a limit on the amount of prior learning which will be recognised towards one of the University's qualifications
(b) a minimum number of credits which **must** be achieved from the specified stage(s) of the programme through undertaking the relevant University programme.

Limit on the recognition of prior learning

26 Recognition of prior learning will not in itself constitute the award of a University qualification; but rather learning that can count towards such a qualification. The volume of prior learning which the University will recognise 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.

27 The recognition and credit limits per programme are shown in Table 1. The list of taught qualifications awarded by the University is set out in the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1).

28 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 marks achieved in the modules studied at and examined by the University.

29 Recognition of prior learning used towards the award of a qualification of the University will be recorded on the Transcript of Academic Record.

Table 1

Qualification	FHEQ level(s)	Total credits for University of Gibraltar qualifications	Limit of recognition of credits as used in the UK (or from other higher education institution (a))	Limit of recognition for certificated and/or experiential prior learning (b)
Certificate of HE	4	120	60	40
Diploma of HE	5	240	120	80
Bachelor's	4-6	360	180 (c)	120 (d)
PGCE	7	60	30	30
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	30	30
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	60	60
Master's	7	180	90	60

Notes to Table 1

30 The following refer to Table 1:

(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 of credit transfer and 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

Minimum number of credits to be undertaken on the University of Gibraltar programme

31 Applications for the transfer of credit or prior learning towards a University of Gibraltar programme are subject to the following minimum being awarded by the University (whether studied at the University or one of its partners):

(a) undergraduate qualifications

(i) Certificates of HE: 60 credits at level 4

(ii) Diplomas of HE: 120 credits, with at least 80 credits at level 5 from the Diploma stage

(iii) Ordinary degrees: 180 credits, with 60 of those credits being at level 6 from the Final stage

(iv) Bachelor's degrees: 180 credits, with 120 of those credits being at level 6 from the Honours stage

(b) postgraduate qualifications

(i) Postgraduate Certificates and the PGCE: 30 credits
(ii) Postgraduate Diplomas: 60 credits
(iii) Master's: 90 credits, with 60 of those credits being from the Master's stage.

(c) micro-credentials

(i) all credits for the programme

Requirements specific to each form of prior learning

Prior learning in an academic credit framework (credit transfer)

32 Applications for prior learning (credit transfer) are subject to the minima set out in Table 1 and the following principles, that the:

(a) learning represented by the credit to be transferred is sufficiently relevant to the University of Gibraltar programme against which the claim is being made (for example by comparison with the intended learning outcomes and module content) and of the appropriate level
(b) credit has been awarded by a degree-awarding body in the European Higher Education Area or another degree-awarding body which is officially recognised
(c) credit has not already been used towards the same level of qualification for which it is now being submitted
(d) credit was awarded by the relevant degree-awarding body within the previous five years or such shorter period as may be specified in the programme specification to meet professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements.

Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning

33 Applications for the recognition of prior certificated and experiential learning are subject to the minima set out in Table 1 and to the following principles:

(a) that the learning has not been recognised by the University or another degree-awarding body and used towards the award of a qualification of the same or higher level to which the application now relates
(b) that the learning is separate from qualifications or learning that are to be used towards demonstrating that the student meets the entry requirements for the programme
(c) that at least some of the learning has been gained within the previous five years, and that any learning which has occurred beyond those five years is still demonstrably current
(d) in the case of experiential learning, that the evidence in support of the application is sufficient, relevant, verifiable and current.

DECISION-MAKING

Making an application

34 A student proposing to claim recognition for prior learning should discuss their proposed claim with the Programme Coordinator of the programme 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 recognition is claimed and the importance of evidencing the corresponding learning outcomes in the claim) and assist with the further development of the claim.

35 The University reserves the right to charge a fee for conducting its recognition 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.

36 The student will be provided with a claim form for Recognition of Prior Learning and must complete and submit this, along with the evidence required to support the claim, to the Registrar. The Registrar will acknowledge receipt and send the claim form and supporting evidence to the Programme Coordinator.

37 The University is responsible for providing advice to applicants and potential applicants about the requirements set out in the Code (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.

Recognition Panels

38 The University will exercise due diligence in considering claims for prior learning in that each claim will be considered by a Recognition Panel appointed by, and responsible to, the Board of Examiners. A Recognition Panel will be convened as and when required in response to a submitted claim and will consider each claim in a timely fashion such that there is no unnecessary delay in determining the outcome of a claim.

Membership

39 The Programme Coordinator will establish a Recognition Panel comprising three or more suitably qualified persons to consider the claim.

40 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 Recognition Panel will minimally comprise:

(a) the Chair (normally the Programme Coordinator) whose role is to ensure that the academic standards of the University are maintained
(b) the Registrar, whose role is to act as university moderator and advise on credit transfer values of prior learning in an academic credit framework, corresponding values of certificated prior learning, and any academic risk of accepting the claim

(c) 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

41 Where the claim is seeking recognition of prior experiential learning, the Recognition Panel will additionally comprise one or more external scrutineer(s) familiar with the specified experiential 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.

42 Where the claim is more complicated (e.g. includes more than one type of prior learning or includes two types of experiential learning), the Recognition Panel will be expanded accordingly.

43 The Chair of the Recognition 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 Board of Examiners, co-opt additional suitably qualified member(s) onto the Recognition Panel.

44 Once the Panel has been established, the Chair will circulate to other members of the Recognition Panel the claim proforma and evidential documents and convene a meeting of the Recognition Panel.

Outcomes

45 Once the Panel is satisfied that it has had proper opportunity to consider the evidence it may:

(a) grant the application
(b) grant part of the application and reject the remaining part
(c) reject the application.

46 Exceptionally, if the Panel considers that it is unable to resolve the matter, it may refer the application to the Board of Examiners, citing the specific exceptional circumstances preventing the Panel from making a decision.

Recording of decisions

47 The Registrar is responsible for:

(a) recording the Panel decision on the student's record (ensuring that, where approved, it will thereafter be properly used by the Board of Examiners and be recorded on the Official Transcript and the supplement to the Transcript)
(b) informing the student, Programme Coordinator and Chair of the Board of Examiners of the outcome of the application.

Monitoring by the external examiner

48 The external examiner for the programme to which the claim relates will have oversight of recognition decisions made by Panels but will not act as a member of a Recognition Panel.

Providing feedback

49 The Programme Coordinator is responsible for providing the student with feedback on their application including, where the application is partially accepted or entirely rejected, the reasons for the decision which will enable the student to make an informed decision about any future study and about whether to submit an appeal.

50 A student has a right to appeal against the outcome and decision on their application for recognition under the grounds and procedures set out in the Code of Practice for Academic Appeals (C11).

MONITORING AND REVIEW

51 The Registrar will provide annual report(s) on claims for recognition of prior learning to Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The report will provide a quantitative and qualitative summary of the cases processed and actions taken.

52 The report(s) will highlight any trends in order to identify emerging institutional issues and to inform enhancement of this Code and/or the University's implementation of it.

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