



GBS Malta

Policy and Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning

for

Admission to GBS Malta MFHEA Accredited Programme

Contents

- 1. Introduction and Terminology*
- 2. Purpose and Scope*
- 3. Principles and Policy for RPL: APEL*
- 4. Procedure for RPL: APEL, Assessment and Fees*
- 5. Support and Guidance for Prospective Students*
- 6. Decision Making, Verification and Moderation*
- 7. Staff Training, Updates and Review of Applications*
- 8. Appeals*
- 9. Policy and Procedure Review and Monitoring*
- 10. Publication and Data Protection*
- 11. GBS Malta RPL: AEL documents*

1. Introduction and Terminology

1.1 GBS Malta recognises the value of learning wherever it occurs, either to meet course entry requirements or to achieve credit towards a named award. Here the concern is with the former as an alternative route to entry to an MFHEA accredited programme of study. Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning (RPL: APEL) is an entry route for more mature students who do not possess, or fully possess, the minimum certificated qualifications required to gain entry to a GBS Malta programme of study.

1.2 GBS Malta will operate its RPL: APEL policy and procedure in a manner that is fair to all prospective students who make an application and in accordance with key policies and regulations, for example, GBS Malta's Equality and Diversity Policy. RPL: APEL may help to break down barriers to participation in education such as those resulting from culture, geography and, social and economic factors.

1.3 Definitions of RPL and APEL are taken from the *MFHEA Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines*¹. These are defined in this document as follows:

RPL is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained

¹ <https://mfhea.mt/recognition-of-prior-learning/>

withing school, college and university and outside formal learning situations as through life and work experiences. (Page 2)

APEL is a process of reflection which identifies and accredits an individual's knowledge, skills and understanding and competencies that have been developed throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning. (Page 4).

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1 Purpose. To set out GBS Malta's policy and procedure for the assessment of recognition of prior learning: accreditation of experiential learning as an entry route to a GBS Malta MFHEA accredited programme of study.

2.2 Scope. The GBS Policy and Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning is applicable only to programmes of study accredited by the Maltese Further and Higher Education Authority. These are as follows:

- Award in Business, Management and Study Skills (MQF Level 4)
- Award in Information Technology and Study Skills (MQF Level 4)
- Master in Business Administration in Business and Management (MQF Level 7)
- Master in Business Administration in Project Management (MQF Level 7)
- Master in Business Administration in Marketing Management (MQF Level 7)
- Master in Business Administration in Entrepreneurship (MQF Level 7)
- Master in Business Administration in Global Investment Banking (MQ Level 7)

3. Principles and Policy for RPL: APEL

3.1 Principles

3.1.1 The principles underlying the GBS Malta Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning are as follows:

- Be learner centred, fair and respect the privacy of the prospective student
- Operate according to GBS Malta's Equality Opportunity Policy (<https://gbs.edu.mt/media/zlhplxi2/gbs-he-malta-limited-equal-opportunities-policy-v10-rm-vfinal.pdf>) and Privacy Policy (<https://gbs.edu.mt/media/i3ahqw5t/gbs-he-malta-limited-privacy-policy-v21-vfinal.pdf>).
- Be given for the learning and not the experience itself
- Be reliable, transparent and consistent
- Involve formal assessment for claims of experiential learning
- Be quality assured both internally (by GBS Malta) and externally (by the MFHEA)
- Provide feedback to the prospective student (applicant), offering support and guidance as appropriate.

3.1.1 Generally, GBS Malta will adhere to and abide by the MFHEA publication: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines (<https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Recognition-of-Prior-Learning-Guidelines-4.pdf>).

3.2 Policy Statement

3.2.1 The GBS Malta policy with respect to Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning is stated as follows:

- (a) To support prospective students when applying for RPL: AEL to make an optimum application when completing the GBS Malta RPL: AEL form.
- (b) To use information and evidence provided by the prospective students to fairly and fully assess their application for RPL: AEL.
- (c) To provide feedback to prospective students on their application, especially when it has not been accepted for entry to their choice of programme of study
- (d) Applications for RPL: AEL only for entry to a programme of study and not claiming exemption from modules/credits on the programme of study will not be charged a fee.
- (e) Applications for RPL: AEL claiming exemption from modules/credits on a programme of study will be charged a fee (see below Section 4.4 below).
- (f) Exemption from modules on a programme of study applied for through the RPL: AEL process will be allowed up to a maximum of 25% of a programme.
- (g) To keep full records of each application for RPL: AEL and the assessment of the application regardless of outcome.
- (h) To provide an annual summary report of applications from prospective students for RPL: AEL identifying areas of good practice and where enhancements may be made.
- (i) To train GBS staff involved in supporting prospective students to make an application and to fairly, consistently and fully assess individual applications.
- (j) To seek approval from the MFHEA for any significant changes made to GBS Malta's RPL: AEL approved by the MFHEA.
- (k) To publish all GBS Malta RPL: AEL documents on its website.

4. Procedure, Assessment and Fees

4.1 Procedure for RPL: APEL

4.4.1 GBS Malta will operate the following procedure in respect of an application for recognition of prior learning: accreditation of experiential learning (RPL: AEL):

- (a) Step 1. Contact GBS Malta member of staff to discuss making an application for recognition of experiential learning
- (b) Step 2. Complete in full the GBS Malta RPL: AEL form
- (c) Step 3. Attach supporting evidence for statements of experiential learning made on the form
- (d) Step 4. Submit the completed form to GBS Malta (email: admissions@globalbanking.ac.uk).
- (e) Step 5: Receipt of application and supporting evidence acknowledged by GBS Malta within five working days
- (f) Step 6: Outcome of application notified within ten working days of receipt of application form and supporting evidence.
- (g) Where an RPL: AEL application has been approved the Programme Leader or equivalent will be notified so that the individual's learning schedule can be arranged.

4.4.2 Application for recognition of prior learning: experiential learning should be made at least one month and up to three months before the start date for the programme being applied to study²

4.4.3 GBS Malta may refer the application back to the prospective student where it is deemed that insufficient information about experiential learning and/or supporting evidence is insufficient. The applicant will be given the opportunity to discuss their application with a member of staff at GBS Malta, revise the application form and add, as appropriate, any

² Note: GBS Malta usually operates three start dates for new cohorts of students each academic year. These are usually in February, April/May and September/October.

additional supporting evidence and resubmit the application. The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the resubmission within five working days.

4.3 Assessment of an Application for RPL: AEL

4.4.1 Each application for RPL: AEL will be assessed for its individual merits using the submitted application form and supporting evidence provided by the applicant. In assessing an application assessment will be informed through reference to the MFHEA Referencing Report (<https://mfhea.mt/referencing-report/>) using the Level Descriptors for MQF Level 2 and MQF Level 3 for entry to the MQF Level 4 Awards; the MQF Level 5 and 6 descriptors for an entry to an MBA programme. For exemption from modules/award of credit on a programme of study the Level Descriptor for MQF Level 4 will be used for the GBS Malta MQF Level 4 programmes and the Level Descriptor for Level 7 for the MBA programmes (<https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Level-Descriptors.pdf>). Here the assessment process will ensure that there is a match between the recognised experiential learning and the programme/module learning outcomes.

4.4.2 The range of possible outcomes from the assessment of an application for RPL: AEL are as follows:

- (a) Full acceptance of the claim for RPL: AEL as an entry requirement to study on a programme.
- (b) Full acceptance of a claim for module exemption/award of credits to a programme of study.
- (c) Partial acceptance of a claim for module exemption/award of credits with specification of exemption granted.
- (d) A request for submission of the application with additional supporting evidence.
- (e) Rejection of application for RPL: AEL for either entry to a programme of study and/or module exemption. Other options, where appropriate, to be advised to the applicant.
- (f) Outright rejection of the application for either entry to a programme of study and/or module exemption. Reasons for rejection will be provided.

4.4.3 As stated in 4.4.1 (f) above the applicant will be informed of the outcome of the assessment of their application within ten working days of a decision having been made. Outcomes of all applications for RPL: AEL for both entry to a programme of study and/or exemption from a programme's modules and credit awarded will be recorded on an Excel data base. This data base will be updated following the assessment and outcome of applications for RPL: AEL.

4.4.4 Applicants for RPL: AEL will be informed of the outcome of their application in a formal letter from GBS Malta signed by the Associate Dean or Director of Quality (the latter where the assessment included input from the Associate Dean). The letter will be emailed to the applicant as an attachment to the email given in the application form by the applicant. Where exemption is granted for a module(s) and credit given for a named programme of study this will be recorded on the transcript of module achievement for the programme, which accompanies the MFHEA approved certificate of award.

4.5 Where GBS Malta reject the application for RPL: AEL the applicant may appeal against the decision (see Section 7 below). Before making an appeal the prospective student is

advised to discuss their application and reasons for rejection with a member of staff at GBS Malta. Following this discussion and if the applicant remains dissatisfied with the refusal decision an appeal may be lodged as set out on Section 7 below. An appeal against the outcome of an application for RPL: AEL should normally be made within 10 working days of receiving notification from GBS Malta of the outcome.

4.4 Applicable Fees

4.4.1 No fees will be charged for an application of RPL: AEL where a prospective student is seeking to use the process to gain entry to a programme of study without applying for exemption from specified modules on that programme of study.

4.4.2 Where an application is made for exemption of a module(s)/credit on a programme of study a fee of one hundred Euros, non-refundable, will be charged. The fee must be paid at the time of the application for RPL: AEL. An application will not be considered unless the fee has been paid. If a resubmission is required, no additional fee would be charged.

4.4.3 Where an applicant lodges an appeal against the outcome of an application for RPL: AEL no fee of fifty Euros will be charged. The appeal will not be considered if the fee has not been paid. This will be refunded if the appeal is upheld.

4.4.4 Where an application for exemption from module(s)/award of credit on a programme of study is granted through the RPL: AEL process a reduction in fees up to a maximum of ten percent of the total fee for the programme will be granted.

5. Support and Guidance for Prospective Students

5.1 Prospective students who wish to make an application for RPL: AEL for entry to a GBS Malta programme of study will be provided support and guidance by the appropriate Admissions Tutor. The Admissions Tutor will, as required, liaise with a teacher on the programme for queries/clarification concerning academic matters. The RPL: AEL application submitted by the prospective student will be assessed by the appropriate Programme Leader, who will make the decisions concerning the application for recognition of prior experiential learning. All staff involved in the GBS Malta RPL: AEL process and procedure will be provided briefing and training by the Director of Quality.

5.2 Whilst GBS Malta will provide support and guidance to individuals wishing to make an application for RPL: AEL it will be made clear to applicants that it is their responsibility to ensure the form is completed fully and to the best of their ability and that the applicant is responsible for producing evidence to support statements and claims made in the form.

5.3 Where an application for RPL: AEL has been refused the applicant may make a further application where additional information and/or evidence was not submitted in the initial application. Applicants may only make one further application where there is information and/or evidence that was not made available at the time of the initial application.

6. Decision Making, Verification and Moderation

6.1 The programme Leader responsible for making decisions on applications by prospective students for RPL: AEL should complete the section of the GBS Malta RPL: AEL Application and Approval Form. An overall assessment should include reference to the information provided by the applicant of the form plus any supporting evidence. The validity of the supporting evidence should be commented upon. Also, if the assessor required any additional evidence from the applicant this should be commented on and the validity assessed.

6.2 The decision concerning whether to accept or reject the claim for RPL: AEL by the applicant should be made on the form. Where the assessor gives partial rather than full approval to the claim for RPL: AEL made by the applicant it should be made clear what is being agreed and what not agreed with a short rationale provided.

6.3 For the first set of decisions for the first cohort of new students each GBS Malta MFHEA accredited programme of study will be subject to a verification process conducted by the Programme Leader of a different programme. Verification will involve inspection of all documentation submitted by the prospective student, the decision outcome and the rationale provided for the decision by the appropriate Programme Leader. Where there is disagreement concerning the outcome the two Programme Leaders should attempt to resolve any such disagreement between themselves. Where this is not possible the Associate Dean will make a final decision upon reviewing all documentation and discussion with the Programme Leaders. Thereafter a sample will be taken for verification. Verification will take place before any decision is communicated to the prospective student. The Director of Quality will hold a meeting with all Programme Leaders and the Associate Dean to discuss any issues arising from verification.

7. Staff Training, Updates and Reviews of Applications

7.1 GBS staff involved in any aspect of assessment of recognition of prior learning: accreditation of experiential learning will be provided with a briefing and training session before being allowed to make any assessments of prospective student applications for entry to a GBS Malta programme of study. The training will involve an overview of the MFHEA publication: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines, together with all the GBS Malta RPL: AEL documents, especially this policy and procedure document, the GBS Malta RPL: AEL form.

7.2 GBS staff involved in assessment of an application for RPL: AEL will be briefed on how to assess the application and the evidence provided. Cases of best practice from the MFHEA publication: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines will be used together with anonymised case studies of assessed past applications from prospective students for RPL: AEL.

7.3 Regular updates, briefing and professional development in respect of recognition of prior experiential learning will be provided on a regular basis, normally at least annually or whenever any significant changes have been made to the GBS Malta RPL: AEL policy and procedure of by the MFHEA.

7.4 A review of the outcomes of applications for RPL: AEL will be conducted by the Director of Quality or nominee normally following each intake of a cohort of students. This will be for all staff involved with the RPL: AEL process and procedure and including the Associate Dean and Operations Manager. A short report on RPL: AEL after each intake of new students to GBS Malta MFHEA accredited programmes will inform the review. Any recommendations for revisions to the policy and procedure resulting from experience gained in its usage will be discussed by managers and implemented where deemed appropriate and leading to enhancements.

8. Appeals

8.1 Where a prospective student makes an application for RPL: AEL for entry to a GBS Malta programme of study and has the application refused feedback will be provided on the reasons for refusal. Where a prospective student is not satisfied with the outcome and/or feedback the individual may appeal against the decision.

8.2 To make an appeal the individual should set out in a letter (which may be by email) their reasons for making the appeal with reference to specific detail in their application with supporting evidence and the reason provided by GBS Malta staff for the refusal decision. This letter should be sent to the appropriate Programme Leader of the course.

8.3 The individual wishing to lodge an appeal should contact the GBS Malta member of staff that initially provided advice and guidance in making the initial application. The member of staff will go through the reasons given for rejection or partial rejection of the application made for RPL: AEL and provide advice of what additional evidence, if any, may be helpful to the appeal.

8.4 An appeal against the outcome of an application for RPL: AEL should normally be made within 10 working days of receiving notification from GBS Malta of the outcome.

8.5 Upon receipt of a letter of appeal GBS Malta will acknowledge the appeal withing five working days of receipt and make a response to the appeal withing ten working days of the receipt of the letter of appeal.

8.6 Should the appeal be successful a letter will be provided stating the outcome of the appeal and what is being granted in relation to their RPL: AEL application. This information will be recorded on the data base and the appropriate Programme Leader or equivalent notified.

9. Policy and Procedure Review, and Monitoring

9.1 The GBS policy and procedure, application for RPL: AEL form will be reviewed on an annual basis. The review will use:

- Summary reports following intake of each new cohort of students
- evidence from individual application and outcomes
- feedback from GBS staff involved in the assessment of RPL: AEL applications and staff who support students in their application
- applicants themselves where contactable.

9.2 Monitoring of the implementation of the GBS Malta RPL: AEL policy and procedure, outcomes, rationales provided for decisions taken and consistency across cohorts on a programme and across programmes will be undertaken by the Director of Quality.

9.3 The above review information will be incorporated by the Director of Quality in an evaluative review report on the GBS Malta RPL: AEL policy, procedure and process and will, where appropriate, make recommendation for enhancements. The review report will be considered and discussed by the Executive Board where decisions concerning enhancements to the policy and procedure will be made. The Director of Quality will be responsible for making revisions/updates. Where significant changes are made the MFHEA will be first consulted before implemented.

10. Publication and Data Protection

10.1 GBS Malta will publish all relevant RPL: AEL documents, including the policy and procedure, application form, summary flow chart, etc. on its website and ensure that these are kept up to date with the most recent versions.

10.2 All data related to applications and outcomes will be kept confidential and be available only to those directly involved. GBS Malta will adhere to the Maltese Governments data protection requirements (<https://idpc.org.mt>).

11. GBS Malta RPL: AEL Documents

11.1 The following documents make up the GBS Malta policy and procedure for the recognition of prior learning: accreditation of experiential learning:

- (a) Policy and Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning
- (b) GBS Malta Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning Application Form
- (c) Flow Chart of the Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning
- (d) Student Application for the Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning Guide
- (e) Staff Guide to the Policy, Procedure and Assessment Process for the Recognition of Prior Learning: Accreditation of Experiential Learning.

*GBS Malta Director of Quality
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