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## Section A. POLICY

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. Knowledge and skills can develop from many types of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (the College) recognises that current and prospective students<sup>1</sup> may acquire learning and skills, in employment or other working/voluntary contexts, which may be directly relevant to their planned vocational programme.
- 1.2. RPEL is the process of gaining recognition of informal and non-formal experiential learning which may have been acquired within a work environment, a voluntary organisation, life experiences or uncertified learning contexts, which can lead to admission and exemption from parts of an MCAST study programme. The process may also take into consideration learning obtained through formal education/qualifications.
- 1.3. This policy is intended to govern the process of admission or exemption on the basis of evidenced prior experiential learning by a student at MCAST.
- 1.4. This policy defines the requirements for granting admission and/or exemptions on the basis of evidenced prior experiential learning. Both may vary depending on the type, basis, and context.
- 1.5. The policy and procedures arising from it are distinct from the official MCAST Admissions Process but may be in parallel to it.
- 1.6. These procedures are administered by the Admissions Board.

### 2. Scope and Nature of RPEL services provided

- 2.1. This policy sets out the expectations, aims and principles, and procedural approach in relation to RPEL for admission or exemption purposes by the College.
- 2.2. The College recognises that central to this policy is the responsibility for the academic standards of all Qualifications and Awards granted in its name and the quality of learning opportunities for students.
- 2.3. The College is ultimately responsible for the academic standards of its Qualifications and Awards. These are issued upon completion of the requirements of the set programme, which are expressed in terms of units, learning outcomes, EQF/MQF levels and credits.
- 2.4. Students have the option of demonstrating prior achievement at a comparable or equivalent EQF/MQF level of certain elements of the intended programme. In such cases, and where appropriate evidence can be provided, the College may grant admission to programmes or exemptions from Units/Modules listed in programme specifications on the basis of demonstrated prior experiential learning.

### 3. Timeframes

- 3.1. The College draws the attention of the student that the gathering of evidence may be time-consuming.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, the term 'student' refers to both prospective or current students.



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- 3.2. Since the portfolio is expected to be a voluminous document, students are advised to start collating it approximately four months ahead of the deadline for submission of applications.
- 3.3. Deadline to submit applications (including Portfolio, CV and all evidence) is the end of March of each year, in anticipation of the academic year that starts in September/October of that same year<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.4. The College will do its utmost to process all applications in time, however it cannot guarantee that applications which are submitted later than the pre-established deadline will be processed in time for the intake of the next academic year.

#### 4. Limitations

- 4.1. The College reserves the right to restrict the list of programmes for which admissions on the basis of RPEL can be considered. Please refer to Annex 1 of the RPL Policy (Doc 358).
- 4.2. Exemptions shall only be approved for whole Units and not for individual elements and/or assessments within a Unit.
- 4.3. No exemptions are possible from any of the Units within MCAST programmes at EQF/MQF Level 3 or lower.
- 4.4. Exemptions from Key Skills Units may be considered for MCAST programmes at EQF/MQF Level 4 and Level 5.
- 4.5. Certificates obtained following a formal education programme more than 10 years prior, may still be submitted as evidence with the application. These will be considered in conjunction with additional proof of further experiential learning.
- 4.6. Research or project components within MCAST programmes cannot be exempted.
- 4.7. Practice-based learning, such as Units achieved through work-based learning, dissertation units and Project units or similar cannot be exempted.
- 4.8. Exemptions cannot exceed 30% of the entire MCAST programme, unless learning outcomes are identical to the MCAST Units and the prior learning has been certified using ECVETs/ECTSs credits.  
  
Provided that in the case of EQF/MQF Level 6 Degree programmes, no exemptions shall be granted from the third year or beyond of a full time programme, or their equivalent on a part time basis.
- 4.9. Granted exemptions should be clearly identified on a student's transcript upon successful completion of the Qualification and Award and will be indicated as 'Exempt by RPEL' and excluded from overall classification, where applicable.
- 4.10. Credits for exemption will only be assigned to students at the end of the programme of study and only upon successful completion of the said programme. The Notification of Performance

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of alternative start dates, the respective deadline for submission of RPEL applications will be notified.



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(NoP) issued to students who terminate their programme prematurely will not include reference to exemptions awarded by RPEL.

- 4.11. The College reserves the right to verify with third parties the authenticity of any documentation submitted by the student.
- 4.12. The College is aware of the need to be mindful of the implications of granting admissions or exemptions for RPEL where professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements affect the College's provision and where the impact of granting requests for RPEL could thus be disproportionately significant.
- 4.13. Following review of particular cases, the Admissions Board may reserve the right to consider exemptions beyond those stipulated in the limitations listed above, or in alignment with decisions taken by the Council of Institutes.

## 5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. Responsibility for the effective implementation of RPEL for Admission and Exemption Policy lies with the Admissions Board (and its ad hoc board/s namely the RPEL Board), operating under the auspices of the Office of the Registrar.
- 5.2. The RPEL Board Composition is specific to each application depending on the course which the student identifies.

The RPEL board shall be composed as follows:

- Registrar (or representative)
- Director of Institute
- Deputy Director
- Institute Vocational Coordinator
- Other Nominees (nominated by the Institute Director) based on their technical expertise

## 6. Monitoring and Quality Assurance arrangements

- 6.1. Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of RPEL Policy for Admission or Exemption lies initially with the Registrar. Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of this process lies with the Quality Assurance Department.



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## Section B. PROCEDURE

### 7. Accessing RPEL for Exemptions and Admissions

- 7.1. The College will assess experiential learning before granting admission or exemption for any such claims. This assessment will be informed by evidence provided by the student, in the form of a portfolio of evidence. Evidence submitted for the purpose of the RPEL Process must be sufficient, relevant, authentic and current.
- 7.2. Claims for Admission to a programme of study via the RPEL process may only be submitted upon first registration to the programme prior to the start of the 1st year.
- 7.3. In the case of claims for Exemption via the RPEL process; Deadline to submit applications (including Portfolio, CV and all evidence) is the end of March of each year, in anticipation of the academic year that starts in September/October of that same year<sup>3</sup>. Notification of any changes to this rule will be issued by the Admissions Office.
- 7.4. Evidence submitted as part of a portfolio may include (but is not limited to):
- Europass Curriculum Vitae** and **Jobs Plus Employment history sheet**
  - Formal Education Certificates** – School leaving certificate, SEC and MATSEC Certificates, Degrees and other Higher Education Certificates etc.;
  - CPD and On-the-Job-Training Certificates** – training certificates related to specific machines/tools or to a specific set of skills (presentations; leadership etc.);
  - Other Certificates** – such as Attendance/ Participation in conferences and/or seminars;
  - Evidence of Community/volunteer work;**
  - Evidence of participation in foreign exchange experiences;**
  - Letters of Recommendation from Employers and/or Peer Reviews** clearly listing (and confirming) any on the job skills possessed by the candidate;
  - Photographs (or other multimedia evidence) and/or Artefacts** proving non-formal skills and/or experience (photographs of projects; articles written by the applicant; budgets and/or book keeping and similar records raised by the applicant etc.)
- 7.5. Supporting evidence must be provided in Maltese or English (with any translations authenticated by an independent certified translator). It is the responsibility of students to arrange any translation and/or supporting verification required by the College.
- 7.6. Any evidence submitted as part of a portfolio must be directly related to the subject of the exemption being applied for.
- 7.7. Students are to include a copy of their Europass Curriculum Vitae and the Jobplus Employment History Sheet within their portfolio.
- 7.8. All requests for exemptions must be made using the online application form, which should be submitted to the Admissions Office through a link which will be made available
- 7.9. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that all required materials, and supporting evidence are enclosed with the application form. Additional evidence may be requested and it is the responsibility of students to provide this evidence.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of alternative start dates, the respective deadline for submission of RPEL applications will be notified.



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7.10. Resubmission of a claim with additional requested supporting evidence is considered as a new claim. Students are allowed one resubmission.

7.11. The College will assess the claim and advise the student in writing within 30 working days.

## 8. Support for Students

8.1. Students seeking RPEL admission or exemptions shall be assisted by the respective Institute, and by the student support services.

8.2. The policy document, including the application form (refer to Doc 362) and the guidance notes (See Section C) shall be made available to students on the College intranet or website and through the main information portal used by students (digitally or in hard copy format).

## 9. Assessing RPEL Requests

9.1. Applications for RPEL will be submitted to and vetted by the Admissions Office.

9.2. Portfolios of Evidence will be referred to the RPEL Board who will undertake the review of the documents submitted as evidence. The RPEL Board will provide an outcome regarding the confirmation or otherwise of exemption or admission.

9.3. The RPEL Board may seek additional expert advice, including internal or external technical advice and may refer to identified third parties where the student developed the respective experience.

9.4. The College reserves the right to set additional assessment/s to test a student's knowledge and competence. Students may also be invited to attend for an interview with the RPEL Board.

9.5. Each application including the evidence, will be evaluated using the following criteria in relation to the Learning Outcomes of the respective Units:

- 'Sufficiency' – is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed?
- 'Relevant?' – is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning claimed?
- 'Authenticity' – is the evidence clearly related to the students' own efforts and achievements?
- 'Currency' – does evidence relate to current learning/practice in the respective vocational sector?

9.6. The confirmation or otherwise of exemption or admission is communicated in writing by the Office of the Registrar within 3 months of the receipt of the application.

## 10. Appeals against decisions

10.1. Where, requests for exemption are not upheld the student shall have the right to appeal under the following terms, at the MCAST Grievance Office:

10.1.1. The student may request a review of the exemption decision to the MCAST Grievance Office on the provided templates by the said Office



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10.1.2. Any appeals to the decision need to be supported by further additional documentation, as necessary.

10.1.3. Appeals to the decision may be lodged within 10 working days of the decision communicated in writing.

## 11. Fees

11.1. An administration fee will be charged for consideration of an RPEL application, document below refers.

### ***Reference Document***

– *DOC 358 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy*



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## **Section C: RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PORTFOLIO - GUIDANCE NOTES**

These notes should be read alongside the Policy for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning Policy for Admissions and Exemptions.

### **12. General Comments**

- 12.1. Students should complete all 5 sections of the RPEL portfolio. If a section is not applicable to your application, please indicate it as Not Applicable. If you need more space than the portfolio provides, insert additional sheets, ensuring your name and ID number are clearly marked on each sheet.
- 12.2. You may make up your own portfolio but you must:
  - retain the standard front sheet
  - use this portfolio's section numbers and headings.
- 12.3. Upon completion, you should take the portfolio to the Admissions Office along with copies of evidence, original certificates and copies of any qualifications referred to.
- 12.4. You may need to seek advice from the respective Institute or from the student support services. Assistance can also be provided by the RPEL Co-ordinator in order to complete the template.
- 12.5. In providing details of your experience, please correlate it to the expected learning outcomes of the Unit/s in question.

### **13. Evidence**

- 13.1. All prior experiential learning must be supported by evidence. This will usually include different forms of evidence, such as (but not limited to):
  - Reference Letters
  - Authenticated reports or outputs
  - Project Work
  - Blogs or Video Diaries
  - Witness Testimony
  - Volunteering Records
  - Observation of Practice or Simulation
  - Authenticated Presentation
  - Catalogues
  - Critiques/Reviews
  - Programmes
- 13.2. Any additional evidence of this sort should be referred to in the portfolio, explaining its relevance to the application.

### **14. (Portfolio) Section 1: Basic Details of Application**

- 14.1. Please complete Section 1 in full.
- 14.2. The Applicant Number will be your ID/Passport number.



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### 15. (Portfolio) Section 2: Work Experience

15.1. In this section, please list the paid occupational jobs you have held or training undertaken which are relevant to the learning outcomes of the programmes which your application is addressing. This includes any in-company training, any work-related experience as well as any international experience you might have.

#### Work experience (Example)

- Employer: AMT Manufacturing Ltd. Main Street, Industrial Estate, Mriehel, tel:21445566
- Role: Assistant Administration Manager
- Main Responsibilities/Duties: Management of general office, supervision of staff development programme (including budgetary control), management of contracts for car maintenance.
- Duration: 2013-2016
- Major Projects: In March 2014, I was given responsibility for managing the closure of one of the service agreements. This involved finding new employment for existing staff and guiding them on their next options. This process involved careful negotiation and a sensitivity to the needs of others. From this experience, I gained specific knowledge and skills relating to personnel issues, especially relating to redeployment and redundancy, union negotiations and implementing change in a service. *(Students are expected to link directly the experience and skills gained with the learning outcomes of the study programme which their application is addressing).*

Evidence submitted:

- Reference from Line Manager
- Client reference letter
- Project Management Report
- Letters confirming my role
- Redundancy Training Course

15.2. In this section you can also give details of training undertaken in connection with present or previous employment. This might include training via in-company courses as part of a company training programme or practice-based training through periods of work placement. You may wish to submit details of company training programmes and list their outcomes.

#### Company Training (example)

- Company Training: Systems Analysis and Support, DTC Eng. Ltd. 2015. Through this 9-month training programme, I attended a series of in-house short courses and was also given practical experience in 2 company departments through working on special projects in systems analysis and business information processing. At the end of this period of training, I had developed an understanding of the problems of installing computer-based management information systems and of the links needed between business management and decision-making. I also acquired new



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skills in programming, data handling and data processing, and am now fully conversant with a range of business software.

Evidence submitted:

- Course file
- Focused reference from employer
- Report on company management information systems
- Copies of programmes developed
- Confirmation of use of range of business software
- Personal statement focusing on how learning has been built on and kept up-to-date.

## 16. (Portfolio) Section 3: Voluntary/Community Work and Life Experience

16.1. Provide details of any voluntary or community work which has resulted in significant learning which relates to the learning outcomes of the proposed course of study. You might include learning which has arisen from interests, hobbies or leisure activities. Examples of experience that might be a basis for an application include work with a mother and child group, a youth group, Scouts or Guides, charity organisation, or participation in an adult education class.

### Voluntary Work (example):

- Branch Secretary/Treasurer, Charity Association, 2015-present
- I have been an active member of the Charity Association for 6 years, undertaking responsibilities as a committee member and, recently, as secretary/treasurer. This work has involved organisation of fund-raising events, arranging staffing at functions serviced by the organisation, training young people in principles of first aid and preparing them for qualifications. As secretary, I was responsible for liaising with a wide range of people and organisations and was responsible for coordinating meetings and taking minutes. As treasurer, I have been responsible for maintaining the accounts and ensuring that the financial base of the organisation is adequately maintained. This work has provided me with knowledge of the voluntary sector and charity organisation and has given me a range of skills and competencies in organisation of meetings, administration, training, management of others and interpersonal skills. *(Students are expected to link directly the experience and skills gained with the learning outcomes of the study programme which their application is addressing).*

Evidence submitted:

- Focused reference from Chair of the Association
- Fund-raising plans
- Financial report
- Training schedule



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## 17. (Portfolio) Section 4: Other Courses

- 17.1. Use this section to list courses for which no formal certificate of completion has been issued. This may include courses taken at institutions of Further or Higher Education which were not completed or courses taken as part of in-company training or work in the voluntary sector. If the course took place more than ten years ago, you will need to show how you have kept your skills and knowledge up to date.

### Other Courses (Example):

- Between 2011/2012 I successfully completed the first year of a BA (Hons) History Degree at the University of Malta. I left the course during the early part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year due to illness. The modules I completed during the first year were:
  - Historical Skills 1
  - Introduction to Sources
  - Education for Historians
  - Early Roman Period
  - Modern European History

Evidence submitted:

- Transcript
- Programme Specification
- Letter from University

### Other Courses (Another Example):

- In June 2011, I successfully completed a 2-week course, training volunteers for teaching English as a second language (as part of preparation for voluntary service with EASO).
- This course covered a number of areas including presentation skills, assessment methods, use of visual aids and awareness of cultural differences. As a result of the course, I acquired new skills in teaching English as a second language. I also developed the ability to organise information into a curriculum and gained an understanding of how cultural background affects the way people learn. *(Students are expected to link directly the experience and skills gained with the learning outcomes of the study programme which their application is addressing).*

Evidence submitted:

- Course handouts
- Certificate of completion
- Statement on subsequent application and use of knowledge gained.

## 18. (Portfolio) Section 5: Additional Information to Support Your Application

- 18.1. In this section, you should include a brief motivational statement (not more than 300 words) to indicate how all the experience and learning you have accumulated is relevant to your



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programme of studies at MCAST. You should use this section to provide further information about how your previous learning relates to your proposed course of study.

*(Students are expected to link directly the experience and skills gained with the learning outcomes of the study programme which their application is addressing).*

**Do not forget to sign the portfolio once it is completed**