

# Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Transfer of Credit

## In Alignment with the Lisbon Recognition Convention

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### 1. Introduction

European City University (ECU) is committed to ensuring fair, transparent, flexible, and academically rigorous procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), transfer of credit, and qualification recognition. This policy aims to strengthen ECU's quality assurance framework and ensure alignment with the institutional mechanisms already described within

the MBA-ECU Self-Assessment Report (SAR), particularly Section 2.3.1 (Respect for Student Diversity and Flexible Learning Paths), Section 2.4 (Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification), Appendix 2.4.2 (MBA Handbook), Appendix 2.4.3 (MBA Admissions Guideline), Appendix 2.4.7A and Appendix 2.4.7B (MBA Transfer Policy), and Appendix 2.4.8 (MBA Transcript). The policy also ensures alignment with:

- The Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)
- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG 2015)
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
- Lifelong Learning principles within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- ECU Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)

ECU recognizes that learning may occur in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts. Therefore, students and applicants should receive fair opportunities to obtain recognition for knowledge, competencies, and skills acquired through previous academic studies, professional work experience, industry certifications, executive education, training programs, military service, entrepreneurship, research activities, or other experiential learning pathways.

This policy ensures that recognition decisions are evidence-based, transparent, consistent, academically defensible, and student-centered.

## **2. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Ensure full institutional compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
2. Establish transparent procedures for recognition of prior learning and transfer of credit.
3. Promote lifelong learning and widen participation in higher education.
4. Facilitate academic mobility across institutions and countries.
5. Prevent unnecessary duplication of learning.
6. Maintain academic standards and integrity.
7. Support flexible learning pathways for adult learners and working professionals.
8. Standardize institutional practices across all ECU programs.
9. Ensure fairness, consistency, and timely decision-making.

10. Support ECU's mission as a globally accessible online university.

### **3. Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to:

- ECU MBA applicants.
- Applicants seeking admission through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Students transferring from domestic or international institutions.
- Learners with professional certifications or executive education credentials.
- Students requesting advanced standing or exemption from specific modules.

The policy applies to all ECU academic departments, faculties, admissions personnel, quality assurance officers, and academic committees involved in academic recognition processes.

### **4. Definitions**

#### **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

Recognition of Prior Learning refers to the formal process through which ECU evaluates and recognizes learning acquired outside the current program of study. This includes formal, non-formal, and informal learning.

#### **Formal Learning**

Learning obtained through accredited educational institutions, including universities, colleges, and recognized training providers.

#### **Non-Formal Learning**

Structured learning outside formal education systems, such as professional training, workshops, executive education, and industry certifications.

#### **Informal Learning**

Learning gained through work experience, self-study, volunteering, entrepreneurship, research, or life experience.

#### **Transfer of Credit**

The formal recognition of academic credits earned at another recognized institution for the purpose of meeting ECU program requirements.

**Advanced Standing**

Permission granted to a student to enter a program at a higher level due to recognized prior learning or transferred credits.

**Substantial Difference**

Under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, recognition should be granted unless ECU can demonstrate a substantial difference between prior learning and ECU program requirements.

**5. Principles of Recognition**

ECU adopts the following guiding principles, which are also reflected in the ECU Internal Quality Assurance framework described in Section 2.1 of the MBA-SAR and supported by Appendix 2.1 (Internal Quality Assurance System), Appendix 2.1B (Annual Evaluation Audit Meeting), and Appendix 2.1.1 (Strategic Plan 2025–2030):

**Fairness and Transparency**

All applicants shall receive equal and unbiased consideration regardless of nationality, age, professional background, or mode of previous learning. Recognition criteria, timelines, documentation requirements, and appeals procedures shall be publicly accessible.

**Student-Centered Flexibility**

ECU recognizes diverse learning pathways and supports flexible access to higher education for adult learners, working professionals, and international students.

**Academic Integrity and Standards**

Recognition decisions shall maintain ECU academic standards and learning outcomes. Recognition shall only be granted where evidence demonstrates equivalency in:

- Learning outcomes
- Academic level
- Student workload
- Competency achievement
- Assessment rigor

**Evidence-Based Assessment**

All recognition decisions shall be supported by verifiable evidence and documented evaluation procedures.

## **Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention**

ECU shall recognize qualifications and prior learning unless substantial differences can be clearly demonstrated. The burden of proof shall rest on the institution, not solely on the applicant.

## **Consistency and Quality Assurance**

Recognition procedures shall be subject to internal quality assurance review and periodic audit.

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## **6. Types of Recognition**

Consistent with ECU's institutional commitment toward flexible learning pathways as described in MBA-SAR Section 2.3.1 and Section 2.4.3 (Recognition), ECU recognizes the following categories:

### **6.1 Academic Credit Transfer**

Recognition of completed academic coursework from:

- Accredited universities
- Colleges
- Higher education institutions
- International institutions
- Online universities with recognized status

### **6.2 Professional and Industry Certifications**

Recognition may be granted for professional certifications where learning outcomes align with ECU modules. Examples include:

- Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
- ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants)
- CPA (Certified Public Accountant)
- PMP (Project Management Professional)
- Google Professional Certifications

- AWS Certifications
- Other recognized professional qualifications

### **6.3 Work Experience and Experiential Learning**

Recognition may be granted for substantial professional experience supported by:

- Portfolios
- Supervisor references
- Professional achievements
- Reflective reports
- Evidence of competencies

### **6.4 Executive Education and Non-Formal Learning**

Recognition may be granted for:

- Executive education
- Corporate training
- MOOCs
- Professional development programs
- Workshops and seminars

Provided that learning outcomes can be adequately verified.

## **7. Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants seeking recognition must:

1. Submit a formal application.
2. Provide authentic supporting documentation.
3. Demonstrate equivalence to ECU learning outcomes.
4. Meet minimum academic and language requirements.
5. Provide certified translations where necessary.

ECU reserves the right to request:

- Additional evidence
- Interviews
- Challenge examinations
- Portfolio assessments
- Competency demonstrations

## **8. Recognition of Prior Learning Procedures**

### **8.1 Application Submission**

Applicants must submit:

- Completed RPL Application Form
- Academic transcripts
- Course syllabi or module descriptions
- Certificates and diplomas
- Professional licenses or certifications
- Resume or curriculum vitae
- Portfolio of evidence
- Reflective statement
- Employment verification letters

Applications may be submitted electronically through the ECU Admissions Portal in accordance with procedures outlined in Appendix 2.4.4 (Admission Process Checklist) and Appendix 2.4.5 (Provisional Offer Letter Procedures).

### **8.2 Preliminary Administrative Review**

The Admissions Office conducts an initial review to verify:

- Completeness of documents
- Authenticity of records

- Eligibility requirements
- Translation requirements

Incomplete applications may be returned for revision.

### **8.3 Academic Evaluation**

The Program Director and Academic Recognition Committee evaluate applications based on the academic standards described in the MBA Curriculum Guide, MBA Handbook (Appendix 2.4.2), and MBA Transfer Policy (Appendix 2.4.7A and Appendix 2.4.7B). Evaluation is conducted based on:

- Learning outcomes equivalency
- Academic level
- ECTS workload equivalence
- Relevance to ECU curriculum
- Currency of knowledge and skills
- Assessment methods
- Professional competencies

### **8.4 Portfolio Assessment**

For experiential learning claims, applicants may undergo portfolio assessment. The portfolio may include:

- Work samples
- Project reports
- Publications
- Business plans
- Professional presentations
- Evidence of leadership responsibilities
- Reflective narratives

### **8.5 Interview or Competency Assessment**

Where necessary, ECU may conduct:

- Academic interviews
- Oral examinations
- Practical demonstrations
- Competency-based assessments
- Challenge examinations

## **8.6 Decision Making**

Recognition decisions shall be categorized as:

- Full Recognition
- Partial Recognition
- Conditional Recognition
- Recognition Denied

All decisions shall be documented and communicated formally.

## **9. Transfer of Credit Policy**

### **9.1 Maximum Transferable Credits**

Students may transfer up to 50% of the total credits of a program unless otherwise restricted by professional accreditation requirements. This provision strengthens the practices already described in Appendix 2.4.7A and Appendix 2.4.7B of the ECU SAR. For the MBA program, students may transfer a maximum of 30 ECTS credits.

### **9.2 Non-Transferable Components**

Consistent with ECU's existing MBA Transfer Policy (Appendix 2.4.7A and Appendix 2.4.7B), the following components are normally non-transferable:

- Capstone Project or Thesis
- Final Integrative Assessment
- Managerial Ethics

### **9.3 Credit Equivalency**

Credit equivalency shall be assessed based on:

- Learning outcomes
- Academic level
- Student workload
- Assessment rigor
- ECTS comparability

#### **9.4 Time Limits**

Credits older than ten years may require additional review to determine currency and relevance. Professional fields subject to rapid change may require shorter validity periods.

### **10. Recognition of International Qualifications**

ECU recognizes international qualifications in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles. This institutional commitment is already referenced in SAR Section 2.4.1 (Student Admission) and Section 2.4.3 (Recognition), where ECU confirms the use of learning outcomes and equivalency-based evaluation for international qualifications. International qualifications shall be evaluated based on:

- Recognition status of the awarding institution
- Qualification framework level
- Learning outcomes
- Workload and duration
- Access rights in the country of origin
- Academic comparability

ECU shall not reject qualifications solely because:

- The institution is located outside France.
- The program was delivered online.
- The qualification differs in structure from French national degrees.

Recognition shall only be denied where substantial differences are identified and documented.

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **11.1 Admissions Office**

Responsible for:

- Receiving applications
- Conducting preliminary administrative checks
- Maintaining records
- Communicating decisions

### **11.2 Program Directors**

Responsible for:

- Academic evaluation of equivalency
- Reviewing learning outcomes
- Recommending recognition decisions

### **11.3 Academic Recognition Committee**

Responsible for:

- Oversight of recognition decisions
- Ensuring consistency across programs
- Reviewing complex or disputed cases

### **11.4 Office of Quality Assurance**

Responsible for:

- Monitoring policy compliance
- Conducting periodic audits
- Reviewing recognition statistics
- Ensuring ESG and Lisbon Convention alignment

### **11.5 Academic Senate**

Responsible for:

- Final policy approval
- Oversight of institutional academic standards

## **12. Quality Assurance and Monitoring**

ECU shall integrate RPL and transfer of credit processes into its Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), as described in Appendix 2.1 (Internal Quality Assurance System) and Section 2.1 of the SAR.

The university shall:

- Conduct annual audits of recognition decisions.
- Monitor consistency across programs.
- Maintain recognition statistics and reports.
- Review student satisfaction regarding recognition processes.
- Benchmark institutional practices against European standards.
- Provide regular staff training.
- Conduct periodic policy review.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) include:

- Processing turnaround time
- Student satisfaction rates
- Appeals rates
- Recognition approval rates
- Consistency across faculties

The Office of Quality Assurance shall prepare an annual Recognition and Mobility Report for the Academic Senate.

### **13. Appeals Procedure**

Applicants have the right to appeal recognition decisions. This mechanism complements the institutional Admission Appeal Policy already referenced in Appendix 2.4.6A and Appendix 2.4.6B.

#### **13.1 Grounds for Appeal**

Appeals may be submitted on the basis of:

- Procedural irregularity
- New evidence
- Perceived inconsistency
- Discrimination or unfair treatment
- Incorrect interpretation of documentation

#### **13.2 Appeals Timeline**

Appeals must be submitted within 14 working days of receiving the decision.

#### **13.3 Appeals Review**

Appeals shall be reviewed by an independent Academic Appeals Panel not involved in the original decision. The panel may:

- Uphold the original decision
- Amend the decision
- Request further assessment
- Return the case for reevaluation

#### **13.4 Final Decision**

The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel shall be final.

### **14. Documentation and Record Keeping**

ECU shall maintain secure digital records of:

- Applications

- Assessment reports
- Supporting evidence
- Recognition decisions
- Appeals outcomes
- Quality assurance reviews

Records shall be retained in accordance with ECU data protection and privacy policies.

### **15. Staff Development and Training**

ECU recognizes that effective implementation of this policy requires trained personnel. The university shall provide regular training on:

- Lisbon Recognition Convention principles
- ECTS and qualification frameworks
- Portfolio assessment methodologies
- Academic equivalency evaluation
- Recognition of experiential learning
- Bias awareness and equitable assessment
- Digital credential verification

Training participation shall be documented and monitored by the Office of Quality Assurance.

### **16. Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

ECU recognizes that recognition policies must evolve alongside developments in higher education, digital learning, micro-credentials, and lifelong learning. Accordingly, ECU commits to:

- Regular policy review
- Stakeholder consultation
- Alignment with European best practices

- Incorporation of technological innovations
- Enhancement of learner mobility and access

Feedback from students, faculty, accreditation bodies, employers, and international partners shall inform future policy revisions.

## **17. Conclusion**

European City University affirms its strong commitment to academic fairness, transparency, student mobility, lifelong learning, and international quality standards through this Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning and Transfer of Credit. By implementing structured, evidence-based, and student-centered recognition procedures, ECU ensures full alignment with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and responds proactively to the recommendations of the ACQUIN accreditation process.

This policy strengthens ECU's institutional quality assurance framework while supporting flexible and inclusive access to higher education for diverse learners across the globe. ECU believes that knowledge, competencies, and learning achievements deserve recognition regardless of where or how they were acquired, provided that academic standards and learning outcomes are demonstrably achieved.

Through this policy, ECU reinforces its role as a modern European higher education institution committed to innovation, integrity, accessibility, and academic excellence.

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*Document Type: Institutional Academic Policy*

*Policy Owner: Office of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance*

*Approved By: Academic Senate, European City University*

*Applies To: All Academic Programs and Students*

*Effective Date: April 2026*

*Review Cycle: Every Two Years*