



Policy Number RPL 011  
Recognition of Prior Learning

6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Amendments

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## Recognition of Prior Learning

### Table of Contents

<b>1. Purpose .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Implementation Procedures .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1 Accessing RPL .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.2 Support for candidates .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3 Assessing RPL claims .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.4 Completing the RPL process .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.5 Process flow summary .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. Review and further information .....</b>	<b>10</b>

### 1. Purpose

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process for recognising outcomes from previous learning contexts which may include formal (e.g. recognised qualification or award), non-formal (e.g. training activities undertaken in the workplace), and informal (e.g. experiential learning) settings. This embraces learning obtained through education institutions and training providers as well as that gained outside formal learning situations as through life and work experiences. RPL enables persons to have their learning and experiences recognised for several purposes which can benefit the individual, employers, and the economy.<sup>1</sup>

This document covers the overarching principles of the RPL process adopted, if required, for prospective admission to any Think Talent OTHM and MFHEA accredited programme. The reliable, transparent, and consistent approach described herein, and the associated procedures, are applicable to Awards and Diplomas, delivered by Think Talent, for which RPL is listed as a possible route in the entry requirements. Considerations for RPL are based on previous learning (not merely experience alone), matching with the relevant programme of study for which the RPL request is being made; whether an application for RPL is accepted, or otherwise, remains within the discretion of the institution.

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<sup>1</sup> MFHEA, SCQF. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines. Accessible from: <https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Recognition-of-Prior-Learning-Guidelines-4.pdf>

## 2. Implementation Procedures

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

Think Talent offers RPL as a process of reflection to support persons, wishing to pursue a particular study programme, with the opportunity of being admitted should it be determined that their previous learning (whilst possibly not officially associated to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level stipulated in the entry requirements) can be construed to essentially constitute eligibility in terms of meeting course prerequisites and readiness for further study. Through RPL, candidates (individuals making a claim for RPL, to distinguish from other applicants) can have their knowledge, skills, understanding, competencies, and experiences, identified, assessed, and accepted to be successfully admitted to a programme leading to a formal award, if the evidence demonstrates that the candidate has achieved a standard of learning comparable to the admission requirements. The scope of RPL, as implemented by the Think Talent, is limited to gain entry to an award, and not for gaining exemption from parts of an existing programme of study.

### 2.1 Accessing RPL

#### *Alignment and application process*

Specific course information is published for Think Talent programmes on the following webpage: ..... listing the approved entry requirements and providing links to online forms. Learners who positively meet the listed minimum qualification(s) may proceed with standard enrolment (through the Online Registration Form). For other prospective candidates who require auxiliary eligibility assessment prior to proceeding with registration, the Recognition of Prior Learning process is made available if RPL is listed as a possibility in the published entry requirements. In the first instance, the latter candidates complete the online application form .....for Recognition of Prior Learning to initiate the RPL process, at the end of which it is determined whether they may register, or otherwise, for the respective course. Should an individual requiring RPL submit a standard registration form beforehand, it will be put on hold until the person is guided through the RPL application process and this is completed. In all cases, one may reach out to Think Talent whereby dedicated professionals can assist with making an informed decision while respecting the privacy of the individual.

The Online Application Form for Recognition of Prior Learning, accessible through the information published for the respective course, outlines the required personal details (e.g. demographics and academic qualifications), as well as supporting documents to substantiate the application (e.g. covering letter and CV). All submissions must be in English. The quantity and type of evidence that is considered acceptable (expanded upon later in this document) may vary depending on the nature of course and the individual case, considering for instance the

	<b>Recognition of Prior Learning</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>4</b>
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level of maturity, learning and experience relevant to the programme of study. Correspondingly, the timescales of the RPL process may also vary albeit Think Talent invests all efforts to reach a conclusion within days, so as to enable successful candidates to meet the course registration deadline, provided there is reasonable cooperation with timely RPL requests and any necessary follow-up.

Candidates are encouraged to begin the RPL process well ahead of any upcoming course dates (at least around 3-4 weeks in advance) to allow sufficient time for assessment and facilitate the systematic management of enrolment. Whilst the Institute fosters an approach based on accessibility and flexibility, entry for the immediate next course intake following a successful RPL claim cannot always be guaranteed, particularly if last-minute submissions or delayed responses hinder process from being completed sufficiently in advance.

### *Fees*

The Academy does not charge any fee for Recognition of Prior Learning. Candidates are responsible for covering any fees imposed by third parties that they may approach in the process, including any ancillary costs and expenses, such as charges for the (re)issuance of certificates/statements/documentation to be submitted as evidence. Should the RPL process be completed successfully, payment of the standard fee for the respective course would be due upon registration.

## **2.2 Support for Candidates**

### *Guidance and accountability*

Think Talent is responsible for administering the RPL process and embodies a central contact point for guidance to candidates. Support is available at any stage of the process, also in the form of one-to-one sessions, on administrative or academic elements, as may be necessary. Administrative guidance can serve to facilitate initial scrutiny to gauge aptness and commitment of candidate, while academic guidance can delve further into the claim procedure as relevant to the course programme. Experienced professionals, with a clear understanding of RPL applicability within the institution, as well as experts having the relevant subject knowledge and proficient at working with the respective learning outcomes, make themselves available to support candidates.

Conversely, candidates are expected to invest time and effort in grasping the provisions outlined in this document and leveraging the guidance offered to prepare a clear, complete, and authentic submission. While Think Talent may not be directly involved in the evidence development or reflective writings, support is offered to candidates who may benefit from

	<b>Recognition of Prior Learning</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>5</b>
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assistance on how to extract and rationalise their learning from experience, matching their evidence with the respective programme of study.

*Practical scenarios [for illustrative purposes]:*

Case example 1:

An individual holding Advanced/Intermediate MQF Level 4 who is currently reading for a Level 6 Bachelor's Degree within another licensed institution, and wishes to follow a Think Talent Level 6 Award (for which the course information lists minimum qualification at MQF level 5 as entry requirement), may consider submitting an RPL claim reflecting (and providing documented evidence) on, for instance, the learning from fulfilled study-units, tutorials and practice that may be relevant to the respective course (supported by corresponding reports, assessments, transcripts, and so forth).

Case example 2:

An individual with General Education MQF Levels 1-2 who aspires to follow a Think Talent Level 4 Award (for which the course information lists minimum qualification at MQF level 3 as entry requirement), may choose to submit an RPL claim reflecting (and providing documented evidence) on, for instance, the learning from job shadowing, work placements and exposure that may be relevant to the respective course (supported by references, records of projects, outputs, and so forth).

*Identification of acceptable evidence*

Candidates are encouraged to reflect on their achievements and compile a comprehensive set of evidence, sufficient in breadth and depth, presenting all the learning, knowledge and skills developed within their experience. Whilst this activity is essentially case-specific, the provision of acceptable evidence plays a vital role for the consistent, reliable, and fair review of RPL claims.

Every RPL application is to be accompanied by a *Covering letter* (expanding on the candidate's claim for RPL consideration) and a comprehensive *Curriculum vitae* (CV), together with any relevant supporting documentation depending on the subject area and the candidate's experiences. Examples (non-exhaustive) of submissions, which may be considered appropriate, alone or in conjunction with other evidence, include: Authentic certificate(s) of attendance/achievement in any related programmes including awards, qualifications or other credentials, with Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) certificate(s) for international qualifications if applicable; Relevant reference letter(s); Others, such as authenticated reports of outputs, projects, practice, assessments, on-the-job training and information sessions, alongside demonstrable proof of commitment to learning and development with engagement in training initiatives in the last ten (10) years. Currency is

particularly relevant for the branches of learning covered by Think Talent and thereby, evidence should demonstrate active inclination towards up-to-date knowledge, skills, and practice. The institution maintains an open-door approach across all the key steps of this process to provide ongoing support and feedback to candidates, ensuring that they are heading in the right direction for a favourable submission.

### 2.3 Assessing RPL Claims

Submissions are made by prospective candidates and received by the Institutue in standard format, using the Online Application Form for Recognition of Prior Learning and the linked email function (for supporting documentation). Each submission triggers an administrative validation exercise, followed by the necessary coordination for application assessment, which is consistent across programmes whilst made on the merit of each individual case. Should it be determined, at this preliminary stage, that the submission is missing essential details in terms of completeness and adequacy, the candidate may already be contacted at this stage to iron out any issues.

RPL assessments are assigned to internal specialists relevant to the programme of study, who have constant access to subject experts engaged for the respective course, enabling strategic synergy for assessors to reach a confident conclusion. Evidence evaluation is conducted based on established criteria, including acceptability, sufficiency, authenticity, and currency, matching to the pertinent learning that the evidence is being measured against. These serve as points of reference to align the candidate's competency with the programme's requirements, taking into consideration several contextual factors such as the MQF levels concerned, claim substantiation, and the demonstrable level of learning.

While an RPL submission is being validated and assessed, Think Talent may invite the candidate to expand further on any points considered relevant to the process, for example through the provision of additional (or alternative forms) of supporting documentation (e.g. original documents; contact details of past/current employer; testimony from corroborator witnessing learning), connecting for an informal interview and/or completing a set of questions. The final review, and corresponding decision, is moderated and endorsed by a management representative of the institution, with all outcomes being carefully and clearly recorded to safeguard the standards of consistency and transparency.



### Case example illustrating the weight of evidence

A **30-year-old individual** submits RPL application along with CV, cover letter and supporting evidence, intending to register for the Think Talent Diploma in Business Management (MQF Level 5).

Supporting evidence for evaluation		Weighted considerations
Academic credentials	<p>Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) with: Grade 5 in two subjects, Grade 6 in two subjects. One of the subjects is a business-related discipline (e.g., Accounts or Economics)</p> <p>Academic profile meets minimum entry-level expectations for RPL consideration</p>	<p>SEC Grades 1–5 are pegged at MQF Level 3; Grades 6–7 at MQF Level 2</p>
Work experience	<p>3 years' experience as Administrator in the services industry, involving client coordination, invoice processing, and scheduling</p> <p>9 years' progressive experience in a private company operating in the commercial sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 years as Administrative Coordinator.</li> <li>4 years as Business Operations Executive, managing procurement and workflow planning.</li> <li>3 years as Operations Manager (current role), overseeing logistics, budgeting, and team leadership.</li> </ul> <p>A reference letter from the current employer highlights on-the-job training, continuous growth, and a wide range of business management competencies.</p> <p>Evidence of practical experience in leadership, operations, finance, and compliance areas directly linked to the programme's learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Recent experiential learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace relevant to the programme of study</p>
Continued development	<p>Attendance at two international business and leadership conferences, focusing on strategic operations and digital transformation.</p> <p>Certificate of attendance for a short course in Project Management Fundamentals.</p> <p>Participation in a local seminar on SME growth strategies and business planning.</p> <p>Demonstrates strong engagement in personal and professional development over the last decade.</p>	<p>Commitment to learning and development with engagement in relevant initiatives within the last ten years</p>
Outcome		Positive

## 2.4 Completing the RPL Process

### *Outcomes and records*

Think Talent reserves the right to discontinue assessment of an RPL application at any time, should the candidate fail to supplement an incomplete submission, provides unsatisfactory responses that do not meet the necessary baseline, or presents misleading information. The candidate may also decide to withdraw an application at any time.

Applications that reach the end of the RPL process may have one of the following potential outcomes:

- acceptance of the claim, meeting entry requirements for a Think Talent programme of study;
- recommendation for resubmission of a claim, including evidence of further learning when attained (undertaking the same process applicable to new applications);
- unsuccessful claim, offering post-outcome advice and proposing alternative paths when possible.

The respective outcome is communicated to the candidate via formal mail, sent electronically, for the individual's record. In cases of claim acceptance, the candidate is notified of the construed eligibility to apply for the programme of study and invited to follow the enrolment process by applying through the Online Registration Form. Henceforth, the individual is considered as a standard course applicant going forward. In cases of non-acceptance, guidance and support remain accessible to the individual who may also reach out to Think Talent by email to request further clarifications or to lodge an appeal through an LMS Appeals Form for consideration, by the management of the institution, of any potential procedural shortcomings perceived. Irrespective of the result, all RPL outcomes are formally documented in the institution's information system for records purposes, to inform future decision-making for comparable RPL claims, and to support verification of fairness and consistency.

### *Monitoring and quality assurance*

The RPL process is integrated within the institution's standard operating procedure for the implementation of an accredited course which details actions and roles/responsibilities, and is regularly reviewed, signed-off academy-wide, and subject to an internal system of auditing. Recognition of Prior Learning, both in the form of an overarching policy and as a specific process, is organized within the framework of the central quality management system, undergoing the same rigorous monitoring and internal/external quality assurance norms that all other operations are subject to within the institution. Such practices enable effectual corroboration that requirements for the overall institutional RPL activities are being effectively met, implemented, and maintained, while recording observations and reporting any findings according to established structures to ensure that any rational recommendations can be acted upon and followed up.

## 2.5 Process flow summary



Candidate submits Online Application Form for RPL, including CV, covering letter, and supporting evidence

Administrative validation

...

Assessment coordination

Initial vetting and assignment of assessment to internal specialists who coordinate the process, working with internal/external subject experts (tutors/lecturers engaged for the course of interest to the candidate) on an ad-hoc basis

Evidence evaluation

...

Final review and decision

Submission evaluated based on established criteria, aligning diverse learning experiences with programme-specific outcomes, corroborating the result with a management representative of the institution

*Throughout this process, Think Talent is accessible for guidance/support, and may also reach out to candidates to expand further on any relevant points*

Outcome communicated to candidate

Acceptance

Non-Acceptance

Candidate registers for admission into the respective course

Clarifications / Advice

Resubmission / Consideration of alternative pathways

Candidate may decide to submit Appeals Form, explaining rationale and substantiating claim(s)

Request for reconsideration escalated to Think Talent top management for definitive conclusion

### 3. Review and further information

This document constitutes an integral part of the Think Talent IQA Policy, and as such is also subject to regular internal audits. External audits, such as MFHEA reviews, also form part of our quality assurance processes. The array of ongoing evaluative exercises, serve to ensure a quality culture for excellence beyond compliance, upholding accountability and strengthening good practices through improvements that may better meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

Learners - past, present, and prospective ones - represent key stakeholders who help stimulate, inform, and optimize our processes. Think Talent welcomes queries, comments, suggestions, and other forms of constructive input including complaints. Further information is accessible through our webpage, LMS or via email. Interactions and exchanges are confidentially handled by Think Talent professionals, in alignment with the legal framework of data protection.

#### *Examples of frequently asked questions (FAQs)*

Does Think Talent accept presentations, lectures, seminars, workshops or training courses without graded assignments/exams as evidence for RPL?

Evidence supporting an RPL submission can be multifaceted, including initiatives undertaken as a means of continued development, for which documentation (e.g. agenda, attendance certificate) can be provided, highlighting the relevant knowledge/skills covered. While a single piece of evidence may not be considered sufficient as a standalone, it can serve to cumulatively demonstrate how one's prior learning aligns with the required competencies and learning outcomes of the respective programme for which admission through RPL is being requested.

I had started a programme of study in an educational institution but terminated my studies before completion; would Think Talent consider the undertaken modules to constitute a form of previous learning that may support admission through RPL?

In principle, academic credentials are linked to programmes which are fully completed, with a successful outcome (e.g. granting of award/qualification). For the purpose of RPL, fulfilled individual units of a part-completed programme, if relevant, may be construed to contribute to a candidate's prior learning portfolio, along with the supporting evidence submitted for RPL assessment to gain entry to an award.

Should I be successful in the Think Talent RPL process, would this be automatically recognized by all education institutions and employers?

The scope of the RPL process completed through Think Talent is limited to gaining entry to an award offered by Think Talent itself. While RPL is widely considered as a valuable mechanism for assessing and recognizing previous learning, especially for individuals with knowledge and experience gained through less conventional means, recognition may vary depending on the provider/industry and the specific context.





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## Recognition of Prior Learning

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