

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy



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European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS)

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Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose	4
2. Status and Legal Framework.....	4
3. Overarching Principles	4
4. Definitions.....	5
5. Policy.....	6
5.1 General	6
5.2 Maximum credit and minimum credit at EAAS	6
5.3 Currency of prior learning	7
5.4 Grading and the effect of RPL on classification	7
5.5 Fee and duration adjustment.....	7
5.6 Study-units excluded from RPL	7
6. Principles of Assessment.....	7
7. Possible Outcomes.....	8
8.1 Two categories of claim	8
8.1.1 Admission: RPL as part of the entry requirements	8
8.1.2 Advanced standing and credit within the programme.....	9
8.2 Routes to assessment.....	9
8.3 Steps	9
8.4 Evidence required	10
8.5 Indicative timeline	10
9. Applicant Advice and Support.....	10
10. Fees	Error! Bookmark not defined.
11. Unsuccessful Claims and Resubmission.....	11
12. Review and Appeal	11
13. Roles and Staffing	12
13.1 Assessor profile.....	12
14. Publicity	13
15. Monitoring, Review and Enhancement	13
16. Commitment	13
Appendix 1 — RPL Claim Form.....	14
Section A — Applicant details.....	14
Section B — Type of prior learning claimed.....	14
Section C — Formal qualifications held.....	14
Section D — Study-units for which credit is claimed	14

Section E — Experiential learning (if claimed)	15
Section F — Documents attached	15
Section G — Declaration	15
Appendix 2 — Frequently Asked Questions	16
What is RPL?.....	16
How do I apply for entry based on prior learning?	16
How do I claim credit within a programme?	16
Is my prior learning too old?.....	16
How much credit can I claim?	16
Will RPL affect my degree classification?	16
What happens to my claim?	16
What are the steps?.....	16
What evidence is needed for certificated learning?	17
What evidence is needed for experiential learning?	17
What does RPL cost?	17
Appendix 3 — Assessor and Moderator Record.....	18
Assessment of criteria.....	18
Recommendation	18
Moderation.....	18
Ratification	19

1. Introduction and Purpose

The European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS) recognises that learning of degree-level quality is acquired in many settings, and not only through formal study. Applicants for EAAS programmes frequently arrive with substantial certificated learning from other institutions, or with knowledge and competence developed through employment in the tourism and hospitality sector.

This Policy establishes the framework by which such learning is identified, assessed, and formally recognised, so that applicants are neither required to repeat learning they have already achieved nor granted credit for learning they cannot demonstrate. Recognition is granted for demonstrated learning, never for experience or elapsed time.

Recognition of Prior Learning at EAAS may lead to admission, to advanced standing, to credit transfer, or to exemption from named study-units, within the credit limits set out in Section 5.

2. Status and Legal Framework

This Policy is a linked policy under the EAAS General Academic Regulations and gives effect to Section 4 of those Regulations. It is to be read together with the Admissions Policy; the Assessment, Marking and Grading Policy; the Student Grievances and Redressal Policy; the Ethics Policy; and the Data Protection Policy. Where a linked policy provides greater operational detail, that policy governs the detail; where there is a conflict on an academic matter, the General Academic Regulations prevail.

The Policy is made under, and interpreted consistently with:

- the Further and Higher Education Authority Act (Chapter 607) and S.L. 607.03;
- the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the European Qualifications Framework;
- the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF) and the MFHEA overarching principles for the Recognition of Prior Learning;
- the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG 2015);
- the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the ECTS Users' Guide;
- the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, the Equality for Men and Women Act, and other applicable Maltese equality legislation; and
- the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586) and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

3. Overarching Principles

EAAS aligns its RPL practice with the MFHEA overarching principles. Recognition of Prior Learning at EAAS shall:

- be learner-centred, fair, and respectful of the privacy of the individual;
- take full account of equality and diversity, and support widening participation;
- be accessible and flexible, and available remotely to applicants in any location;
- be granted for demonstrated learning, and never for experience alone;
- use the MQF to determine the level, volume, and depth of evidence required;

- be reliable, transparent, and consistently applied;
- involve formal assessment wherever a summative claim is made;
- carry the same value as credit gained through formal study at EAAS;
- be quality assured internally and externally; and
- comply with all applicable statutory legislation.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning: the process by which learning has already been achieved through formal, non-formal, or informal routes is identified, assessed, and formally recognised against the learning outcomes of an EAAS programme or study-unit.
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning: recognition of learning that has been formally assessed and certificated by a recognised awarding body.
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning: recognition of learning derived from professional, voluntary, or life experience that has not been formally certificated.
Credit transfer	The recognition of ECTS credits awarded by another higher education institution towards the requirements of an EAAS programme, where learning outcomes align.
Advanced standing	Admission to a stage of a programme later than Stage 1, based on recognised prior learning equivalent to a complete stage.
Exemption	A decision that an applicant needs not undertake one or more specified study units, having demonstrated the intended learning outcomes of those units.
Articulation	An arrangement, approved in advance by the Senate / Academic Council, under which a defined qualification from a named institution is mapped once to a fixed volume of EAAS credit, so that individual applicants holding it need not be assessed case by case.
Summative RPL	RPL that results in the award of ECTS credit of the same value as credit gained through formal study at EAAS.
Formative RPL	Assessment of an individual's knowledge and skills for guidance, personal, or career-development purposes, which does not result in the award of credit.
MQRIC	The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre, within the MFHEA, issues recognition statements for foreign qualifications.

5. Policy

5.1 General

- EAAS is not obliged to consider a claim where the nature of the provision makes recognition inappropriate, or where the study unit concerned is excluded under Section 5.6.
- RPL decisions are made at programme level, so that subject expertise informs the judgement, and is ratified by the Didactic Board.
- Claims must normally be submitted before admission or readmission. Retrospective claims made after a student has commenced study of the unit concerned are not considered.
- A claim must be submitted no later than eight weeks before the intended starting date of the programme. A late claim may be admitted where the RPL Coordinator is satisfied there is good reason.
- Prior learning undertaken at EAAS is recognised only where the study-unit concerned was completed and passed.

5.2 Maximum credit and minimum credit at EAAS

The Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme determine the volume of credit that may be recognised. No award may be conferred where more than half of its credit has been obtained by RPL, so that every EAAS award reflects a substantial body of learning assessed by EAAS.

Award	Total credit	Maximum credit by RPL	Minimum credit at EAAS
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Tourism and Hospitality Management	180 ECTS (MQF 6)	90 ECTS (50%)	90 ECTS
Exit award: Diploma	120 ECTS (MQF 5)	60 ECTS (50%)	60 ECTS
Exit award: Certificate	60 ECTS (MQF 5)	30 ECTS (50%)	30 ECTS
Future awards at MQF Level 7 (≤ 90 ECTS)	≤ 90 ECTS	One third, to a maximum of 30 ECTS	Balance
Future awards at MQF Level 7 (> 90 ECTS)	> 90 ECTS	One half, to a maximum of 45 ECTS	Balance

Where prior learning was undertaken at EAAS on a programme that has been replaced by, or is directly equivalent to, the programme now applied for, credit transfer may be considered for the full credit value of the units passed, subject to the currency requirement and to the minimum-credit rule above.

5.3 Currency of prior learning

Prior learning should normally have been achieved within the five years preceding the start of the programme. Learning older than five years may still be recognised where the applicant provides evidence that the knowledge and competence remain current — for example through continuous professional practice, recent professional development, or successful completion of a challenge assessment. Currency is assessed on the substance of the learning, not by the date on the certificate alone.

5.4 Grading and the effect of RPL on classification

- Credit awarded through RPL is ungraded. The transcript records the unit as passed, annotated “RPL”.
- RPL credit is excluded from the calculation of the Grade Point Average and of the Final Weighted Average Mark. Classification of the award is determined solely by marks achieved in study units assessed by EAAS.
- Where the prior learning was undertaken at EAAS on an equivalent unit, the Didactic Board may direct that the mark originally awarded be carried forward. Any such decision is stated expressly in the RPL outcome letter.
- An applicant who has been granted RPL for a substantial volume of credit remains eligible for an honours classification, which is computed on the remaining, EAAS-assessed credit.

5.5 Fee and duration adjustment

Where credit is granted, tuition fees and the expected period of study are adjusted proportionately to the credit recognised, based on the published per-credit tuition rate. The adjustment is confirmed in writing before the applicant accepts an offer.

5.6 Study-units excluded from RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning is not available for:

- the final-stage research project or dissertation, which must be undertaken and assessed at EAAS;
- any study-unit designated by the Senate / Academic Council as integrative or capstone in character; or
- a study-unit that the applicant has previously attempted and failed at EAAS.

6. Principles of Assessment

Every RPL claim is assessed against the intended learning outcomes of the study-unit or stage claimed, applying a threshold judgement: the assessor determines whether the outcomes have been met or not met. Assessment is governed by the Assessment, Marking and Grading Policy and rests on academic judgement exercised against the following criteria.

Criterion	Question the assessor must answer
Validity	Do the learning outcomes claimed genuinely correspond to the evidence presented?

Criterion	Question the assessor must answer
Authenticity	Is the evidence demonstrably the applicant's own work and achievement?
Relevance	Does the learning map onto the intended learning outcomes of the study-unit claimed?
Sufficiency	Is there enough evidence to cover all the intended learning outcomes, not merely some?
Currency	Is the learning up to date and still applicable to current practice?
Reliability	Would another assessor, applying the same criteria, reach the same decision?
Level	Is the learning demonstrated at the MQF level of the study-unit claimed, not below it?

Assessors must also consider whether an applicant would be disadvantaged by not having developed, through the units exempted, the study skills or foundational knowledge on which later units depend. Where such a risk exists, the assessor may recommend partial exemption, or exemption conditional on a bridging activity.

7. Possible Outcomes

Outcome	Effect
Admission with RPL	Prior learning satisfies all or part of the published entry requirements; the applicant enters at Stage 1.
Advanced standing	The applicant enters Stage 2 or Stage 3; a complete stage having been recognised.
Credit transfer	ECTS credit from another institution is recognised against specified study-units.
Exemption with RPL	The applicant is exempted from one or more named study-units.
Articulation	Credit is granted under a pre-approved mapping, without individual assessment.
Claim not upheld	No credit is granted. Partial exemption may be offered, and the applicant may resubmit it once.

8. Procedure

8.1 Two categories of claim

8.1.1 Admission: RPL as part of the entry requirements

An applicant may be admitted to Stage 1 where prior learning is broadly equivalent, in content, volume, and level, to the qualification normally required for entry, as mapped against the MQF. Where experiential learning is offered, the experience must be demonstrably relevant to the skills required for entry, and of appropriate volume and

level. The qualification presented is treated as an alternative to the published entry qualification, not as a waiver of it.

8.1.2 Advanced standing and credit within the programme

An applicant may be exempted from specified study-units, or admitted to a later stage, where prior learning is substantially equivalent in content, volume, and level to the credit claimed, and where that learning was assessed by valid and reliable means.

8.2 Routes to assessment

Following the initial screening interview, the RPL Coordinator directs the claim to one of three routes:

- **Route 1 – Portfolio of evidence.** The applicant submits, electronically, a reflective portfolio mapped to the intended learning outcomes. It may include analytical evaluations of professional practice, an analysis of the issues underlying that practice, video or audio material, an assessor's observation of practice, and a detailed curriculum vitae providing context. The portfolio must include a reflective essay or an annotated mapping grid, in which the applicant explains the MQF or professional level attained.
- **Route 2 – Assessment without attendance.** The applicant completes the same summative assessments as enrolled students, without attending teaching sessions.
- **Route 3 – Challenge assessment.** The applicant undertakes a single summative assessment, designed for the purpose, against the learning outcomes of the unit claimed.

8.3 Steps

- The applicant contacts rpl@eaas.mt and receives the RPL Policy, the claim form, and the FAQ.
- An RPL Adviser conducts an initial screening interview by video conference. This interview is informal, free of charge, and establishes whether sufficient evidence is likely to exist. Where the Adviser concludes that a claim is unlikely to succeed, the applicant is advised accordingly and no fee is charged.
- If the claim proceeds, the applicable fee is invoiced, and the applicant assembles the evidence.
- The claim is assessed by an RPL Assessor and independently moderated by a second academic. Gaps identified during assessment are communicated to the applicant, who may supply further evidence within a stated period.
- At least two members of the programme team, one of whom is the study-unit leader, are involved in consideration of any experiential claim. Their recommendation names the units exempted and states the total credit volume.
- The RPL Coordinator issues a written decision, with reasons and with feedback, normally within three weeks of receipt of a complete claim. Feed-forward guidance is provided whether the claim succeeds.
- The decision is ratified by the Didactic Board and recorded on the student record and transcript, annotated "RPL".

8.4 Evidence required

A claim for certificated learning must normally include:

- a transcript or equivalent from the awarding institution, confirming the level of the qualification against the MQF or EQF, the date of completion, and the study units taken;
- the learning outcomes and curriculum on which recognition is sought, in the form of study-unit specifications or a programme handbook;
- a completed mapping document, setting out how the prior learning meets the intended learning outcomes of each unit claimed; and
- for a qualification awarded outside Malta, an MQRIC recognition statement issued by the MFHEA.

A claim for experiential learning must in addition include a detailed curriculum vitae, evidence of the applicant's professional background and any relevant training, and the reflective portfolio described at Route 1. Where evidence requires translation, the applicant is responsible for providing a certified translation.

8.5 Indicative timeline

Stage	Timeframe	Responsible
Enquiry and initial guidance	On request	RPL Adviser
Initial screening interview (no fee)	Within 10 working days of enquiry	RPL Adviser
Formal claim submitted with evidence	No later than 8 weeks before intake	Applicant
Fee invoiced (only if claim proceeds)	On acceptance of claim	Admissions
Assessment and moderation	Within 15 working days of complete claim	RPL Assessor and Moderator
Decision issued in writing	Within 3 weeks of complete claim	RPL Coordinator
Ratification and recording	At the next Didactic Board	Didactic Board
Request for feedback/review	Within 7 working days of decision	Applicant
Appeal decision	Within 15 working days of appeal	Institutional Appeals Committee

9. Applicant Advice and Support

- EAAS publishes this Policy, the claim form, and a Frequently Asked Questions document on its website and provides them on request. Support is delivered remotely, by video conference, email, and the VLE.

- Guidance is provided by staff experienced in both RPL and the relevant subject. Every claim is supported by an academic staff member with subject knowledge of the units concerned.
- The Adviser may help an applicant to identify and articulate learning, but must not develop the evidence, write the reflective account, or assess the claim.
- Any view expressed by an Adviser on a draft claim is indicative only and does not guarantee the outcome of formal assessment. The extent of support available, including any limit on tutorial hours, is stated in advance.
- Additional guidance is offered to applicants whose first language is not English, and reasonable adjustments are made for applicants with disabilities or specific learning difficulties. Responsibility for preparing and submitting the claim, in accordance with the published procedure and deadlines, rests with the applicant.

11. Unsuccessful Claims and Resubmission

- Every unsuccessful claim is recorded, with reasons, and reported annually by the RPL Coordinator.
- Where advanced standing is refused, the applicant may be offered exemption on a unit-by-unit basis where the evidence supports it.
- An unsuccessful claim may be resubmitted once, before consideration by the Didactic Board, where the RPL Coordinator considers that further evidence could reasonably demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.
- Refusal of a claim does not prejudice the applicant's application for admission by the ordinary route.

12. Review and Appeal

An applicant who believes that a claim has not been handled in accordance with this Policy may seek review and, if necessary, appeal.

- The applicant may first request feedback and an explanation of the decision from the RPL Coordinator, within 7 working days of the decision.
- If, having considered that feedback, the applicant wishes the decision to be reviewed, they submit written grounds to the Programme Coordinator within 10 working days. A nominee not involved in the original decision considers the request and responds in writing within 10 working days.
- If the matter remains unresolved, the applicant may appeal, with supporting evidence, to the Institutional Appeals Committee within 7 working days.

An appeal is admitted on one or more of the following grounds only:

- material or procedural irregularity in the decision-making process;
- evidence of unjustified discrimination or bias against the applicant; or
- new and material evidence that could not reasonably have been produced at the time of the original decision.

The Institutional Appeals Committee, whose members have had no prior involvement in the claim, issues a final institutional decision with written reasons within 15 working days. Incomplete forms, late submissions, claims unsupported by evidence, and frivolous

or vexatious applications are normally rejected without full consideration. Appeals are not accepted from a third party without the applicant's written consent. All appeal outcomes are recorded and monitored. Where internal remedies are exhausted, the applicant retains the right to refer the matter to the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

Disagreement with the academic judgement of an assessor, properly exercised, is not in itself a ground of appeal.

13. Roles and Staffing

Role	Responsibility
RPL Coordinator	Owens the process for the programme; explains it to applicants; issues decisions; maintains the RPL register; reports annually. Contact: rpl@eaas.mt
RPL Adviser	A subject specialist who guides the applicant in preparing the claim. The Adviser does not assess the claim and does not write or develop the applicant's evidence.
RPL Assessor	A subject specialist, independent of the preparation of the claim, who assesses the evidence against the intended learning outcomes.
RPL Moderator	A second academic who moderates the Assessor's judgement. Assessor and Moderator must be different individuals.
Didactic Board	Ratifies RPL decisions and ensures they are recorded on the student record.
QA and Compliance Unit	Audits the process, monitors timeliness and consistency, and prepares data for the Annual Programme Analysis.
External Examiner	Scrutinises a sample of RPL claims as part of the standard external examination cycle.

Staff involved in RPL receive induction, training, and continuing professional development, including workshops on evidence assessment, MQF levelling, and the use of e-portfolio tools. RPL duties are recognised in staff workload models.

13.1 Assessor profile

Programme	Assessor profile
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Tourism and Hospitality Management (MQF 6)	A full qualification at MQF Level 7 or above in Tourism, Hospitality, or a cognate discipline, together with at least five years of higher education teaching experience in a relevant subject; or an equivalent combination of academic qualification and senior professional experience in the tourism and hospitality sector, approved by the Senate / Academic Council.

14. Publicity

Programmes that admit students through RPL state this clearly in their published materials. Prospective applicants are told where to obtain advice, what fees apply, and what deadlines govern a claim. The Policy, the claim form, and the FAQ are downloadable from the EAAS website.

15. Monitoring, Review and Enhancement

- RPL is an academic process and is subject to institutional assessment and quality assurance procedures. RPL data forms are part of the Annual Programme Analysis.
- The QA and Compliance Unit records the number of claims, their outcome and success rate, the time taken, the subsequent progression and attainment of students admitted with RPL, and the experience reported by applicants and staff.
- A sample of RPL claims is scrutinised by the External Examiner in each cycle.
- The data is used to identify risks to the consistency of assessment and to inform enhancement, including the use of e-portfolio and other technologies.
- This Policy is owned by the Senate / Academic Council, maintained by the QA and Compliance Unit, and reviewed at least annually or upon regulatory change.

16. Commitment

EAAS is committed to conducting its RPL procedures fairly, in accordance with the laws of Malta and the guidelines of the MFHEA, and in strict compliance with legislation on equality and non-discrimination. EAAS actively supports groups that face disadvantages in education and employment and seeks through RPL to widen participation among those who have not traditionally entered higher education.

Appendix 1 - RPL Claim Form

Complete this form to request Recognition of Prior Learning at EAAS. Submit it, with supporting evidence, to rpl@eaas.mt no later than eight weeks before your intended start date.

Section A – Applicant details

Full name	
Email address	
Contact number	
Programme applied for	
Stage of entry sought	
Intended start date	
Country of residence	

Section B – Type of prior learning claimed

Tick all that apply:

- Prior awarded qualification (e.g. MQF Level 5 or 6 award)
- Prior certificated learning (assessed credit not leading to a full award)
- Prior experiential learning (professional or workplace learning, uncertificated)

Section C – Formal qualifications held

Qualification	MQF level	Subject area	Institution	Date achieved

Section D – Study units for which credit is claimed

Unit code	Unit title	ECTS	Route (1 / 2 / 3)

Section E – Experiential learning (if claimed)

Summarise the roles, responsibilities, and duration of the experience on which you rely, and identify the learning — not the activity — that resulted. An Assessor will contact you if further evidence is required.

Employer/context	
Role and dates	
Learning claimed	

Section F – Documents attached

1. Transcript or Diploma Supplement	
2. Completed mapping document	
3. MQRIC statement (international qualifications)	
4. Reflective portfolio (experiential claims)	
5. Certified translations, where applicable	

Section G – Declaration

I confirm that the evidence submitted is my own work and accurately represents learning I have achieved. I understand that credit granted through RPL is ungraded and does not contribute to the classification of my award, that my claim must be submitted before admission, and that a false declaration constitutes academic misconduct under the Student Code of Conduct Policy.

Signature	
Date	

Appendix 2 — Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is RPL?

It is the recognition of learning you achieved before starting at EAAS. That learning may count towards the entry requirements for a programme, or towards credit within it.

2. How do I apply for entry based on prior learning?

Contact the Admissions team, who will advise whether your prior learning is likely to be equivalent to the published entry requirements. If your claim succeeds, you receive an offer of entry at the appropriate stage.

3. How do I claim credit within a programme?

Submit the claim form in Appendix 1, with evidence, before you are admitted. Retrospective claims are not considered. You may be asked for further evidence during assessment.

4. Is my prior learning too old?

Learning is normally expected to have been achieved within the last five years. Older learning may still be recognised if you can show it remains current — through continuous practice, recent professional development, or a challenge assessment. Speak to your RPL Adviser before assuming your learning is out of date.

5. How much credit can I claim?

Up to half the credit of the award. For the 180-ECTS Bachelor of Arts (Honours), that is a maximum of 90 ECTS. At least 90 ECTS must be earned through study assessed by EAAS, including the final-stage research project, which cannot be claimed through RPL.

6. Will RPL affect my degree classification?

No. RPL credit is recorded as a pass and carries no mark. Your classification is calculated only from the study units you complete at EAAS. You remain eligible for any honours classification.

7. What happens to my claim?

An RPL Assessor evaluates it, and a Moderator independently reviews that judgement is always involved. You will be told if further evidence is needed and given an indication of timing. A decision normally issues within three weeks of a complete claim, though an experiential claim requiring additional evidence may take longer.

What are the steps?

- **Step 1 – Initial discussion:** An informal video or telephone interview with your Adviser establishes whether sufficient evidence is likely to exist. You will be asked about your roles, how often you perform them, and how your employers assessed your competence, together with specific questions to gauge your knowledge of each unit. The purpose is to help you judge whether to proceed, not to test you. No fee is charged at this stage, and if a claim is unlikely to succeed you will be advised how to progress through study instead.
- **Step 2 – Gathering evidence:** You assemble a portfolio or arrange a demonstration of practical skill. Evidence must be verifiably your own; the portfolio should be organised so that it is clear which item supports which learning outcome, rather than comprising everything you hold; and where evidence is not recent, you should address

whether the task or skill has since changed. There must be enough evidence to show that you can demonstrate the required knowledge and skill reliably.

- **Step 3 – Verification:** This stage confirms authenticity and addresses any gaps. It may involve written references from former supervisors, verification with previous employers, or a conversation in which the Assessor asks you to explain an item of evidence in depth. Once complete, the Assessor makes a recommendation, the Moderator reviews it, and the Didactic Board ratifies the decision.

8. What evidence is needed for certificated learning?

EAAS needs to see what you learned, when, who awarded the credit, and at what level. That normally means transcripts, study-unit or syllabus descriptors, and confirmation of the marks achieved. The Assessor then judges whether that learning is comparable to what you would achieve by studying the unit at EAAS.

9. What evidence is needed for experiential learning?

You reflect on your experience, identify the learning within it, and evidence that learning. A reflective portfolio, submitted electronically, might include analytical evaluations of practice, an analysis of the issues underlying it, video or audio material, an assessor's observation of practice, and a detailed CV giving context. Include an essay or annotated grid explaining the MQF or professional level you consider you have reached.

10. What does RPL cost?

The initial interview is free, and no fee is charged if your claim does not proceed beyond it. Fees for assessment are published on the EAAS website and stated on the claim form and are the same for all applicants. If credit is granted, your tuition fee is reduced proportionately, because you will study fewer units.

Appendix 3 — Assessor and Moderator Record

To be completed for every claim and retained with the student record.

Applicant name	
Programme	
Study-unit(s) claimed	
ECTS claimed	
Route (1 / 2 / 3)	

Assessment of criteria

For each criterion, record the judgement and the evidence relied upon.

Criterion	Met / Not met	Evidence and comment

Recommendation

Select one:

- Evidence accepted as demonstrating the intended learning outcomes — credit recommended
- Further evidence required — specify below
- Evidence rejected — learning outcomes not demonstrated

Reason	
Assessor name	
Assessor's signature and date	

Moderation

The Moderator must be a different individual from the Assessor and must not have advised the applicant.

Moderator name	
Agree with recommendation? (Y / N)	

Comment	
Moderator signature and date	

Ratification

Didactic Board date	
Credit ratified (ECTS)	
Recorded on transcript by	
Date	

Attach: the applicant's claim form, the mapping document, and all evidence submitted.