

Study progress based on prior learning

Concept and procedure

This document accompanies the regulations for the recognition of prior learning, as approved by the Executive Board of the Antwerp University Association on 21 March 2018

1 The choice for a minimalist approach

The RPL procedure of the Antwerp University Association is outlined as follows:

- Only the portfolio method is used, supplemented by a structured interview which may incorporate a skills test.
- The procedure takes place almost entirely at the location where the expertise is available: within the institution or within the programme. It is not carried out at the level of the Association, except in cases where joint action would be beneficial. There are two fixed periods of time during which the procedure takes place; the timing of which is coordinated as much as possible to the requirements of the academic year. An institution may also organise additional procedure periods.
- Candidates are expected to invest substantial effort.
- Supervision focuses on the method.
- If no competence profiles are available, objectives and content from the prospectus can be used in the meantime.
- The institution appoints three assessors for the candidate's assessment. The composition of this Assessment Committee is motivated and according to bundled competences (for additional details, see 3.4).
- The Association is the validating body and bears responsibility for the quality assurance and the grievance procedure.
- Competence certificates are registered and presented within the institutions, on behalf of the Association.

2 The procedure

It is important to provide guidance with regard to the procedure. This is further specified at the institutional level. The institution's RPL coordinator is the point of contact in this regard.

2.1 Structure of the procedure

See Figure 1 ('Basic Scheme') in the document entitled 'Procedures and time frames'.

Time frames are specified between the various steps of the procedure. In some cases, they are minimum time frames and, in others, maximum time frames. The Christmas holidays, Easter holidays and the months of July and August are not counted in the maximum time frames.

2.2 Spring procedure

See Figure 2 ('Spring Procedure') in the document entitled 'Procedures and time frames'.

During this procedure, the guidance towards enrolment (including the intake interview) ends on 28 February. The spring procedure continues from 1 March to 19 June. The time frame for objections runs for seven calendar days after the decision on the aptitude test is issued in writing. The ruling on an objection will be issued no later than 20 calendar days after receipt of the objection. The dates in the scheme should be understood as 'no later than the last working day before...'

Graduate programmes

The following provisions apply to candidates seeking to be tested on programme components from the graduate programmes:

During this procedure, the guidance towards registration (including the intake interview) concludes on 14 February. The spring procedure continues from 15 February to 15 May. The time frame for objections runs for seven calendar days after the decision on the aptitude test is issued in writing. The ruling on an objection will be issued no later than 20 calendar days after receipt of the objection. The dates in the scheme should be understood as 'no later than the last working day before...'

2.3 Autumn procedure

See Figure 3 ('Autumn Procedure') in the document entitled 'Procedures and time frames'.

During this procedure, the guidance towards enrolment (including the intake interview) ends on 30 September. The autumn procedure continues from 1 October to 16 February. The time frame for objections runs for seven calendar days after the decision on the aptitude test is issued in writing. The ruling on an objection will be issued no later than 20 calendar days after receipt of the objection. The dates in the scheme should be understood as 'no later than the last working day before...'

Graduate programmes

The following provisions apply to candidates seeking to be tested on programme components from the graduate programmes:

During this procedure, the guidance towards enrolment (including the intake interview) ends on 30 September. The autumn procedure continues from 1 October to 15 December. The time frame for objections runs for seven calendar days after the decision on the aptitude test is issued in writing. The ruling on an objection will be issued no later than 20 calendar days after receipt of the objection. The dates in the scheme should be understood as 'no later than the last working day before...'

2.4 *Additional procedure*

Each institution in the Antwerp University Association may arrange one or more additional procedures. When setting up such additional procedures, the time frames described in Section 2.1 must be respected in full.

3 **Actors**

3.1 *Candidates*

The procedure is aimed primarily at lateral entrants who are of the opinion that they are eligible for a competence certificate, based on relevant work (or other) experience. Long before their actual enrolment for a programme, they can follow a path towards earning a competence certificate. This will leave them with sufficient time to prepare an application for exemption.

Enrolled students can also follow the procedure. To encourage them to allow sufficient time for the procedure and to prepare all of the steps thoroughly, they follow the same timing.

Candidates are responsible for their portfolios.

3.2 *The Institutional RPL Coordinator*

Only one Institutional RPL Coordinator is appointed within an institution. This Coordinator refers each candidate to a supervisor. At least once a year, a consultation is held amongst the Institutional RPL Coordinators concerning the quality assurance of the procedure. The Institutional RPL Coordinator provides feedback to the supervisors upon request. In some cases, the Institutional Coordinator may also serve as a supervisor.

3.3 *Supervisors*

The candidate contacts the institution to arrange for an intake interview and, during the information and orientation phase, receives assistance from a supervisor, who provides information about the procedure, the method and the reference framework. As appropriate, the supervisor makes referrals to different and/or more suitable procedures.

In the acknowledgement phase, and at the initiative of the candidate, the supervisor provides advice in an individual conversation.

Proper training is provided for supervisors. They also receive a manual to support their work.

3.4 *Assessors*

Three assessors are assigned to work with each file. The three assessors together constitute the Assessment Committee, which decides by majority vote to determine the competences that are to be recognised. The three assessors appoint from amongst themselves a chair, who will sign the necessary documents on behalf of the Assessment Committee.

- At least one assessor must be well familiar with the portfolio method.
- At least one assessor must have a thorough, comprehensive overview of the programme.
- At least one assessor must have completed the assessors' training.
- At least one assessor must be from outside the department or the teaching group (university colleges) or the faculty (university) in which the aptitude test is administered. This assessor should ideally be from or have a strong relationship with the professional field. Having an assessor from the field is helpful in several respects, including assisting in arriving at the proper estimation of professional experience.

Argumentation for the composition of the Assessment Committee is presented to the validating body.

Proper training is provided for assessors. They also receive a manual to support their work.

In addition, these assessors make reports in the interest of quality assurance.

3.5 *Institution of higher education*

The choice to have this procedure take place at the level of the institution was based primarily on the desire to minimise the distance between the parties involved in the procedure. In practice, the procedure usually takes place at the level of a faculty, department, teaching group or programme. Echelons below the programme are excluded.

The actual organisation is carried out almost entirely within the institution: contact with the candidate, organisation of supervision, assessment and recognition. To a large extent, the institution does this on behalf of the Association.

The independence of the supervisors and the assessors is safeguarded by the institution. For example, a supervisor may not be involved in the assessment, and an assessor may not be involved in the supervision.

3.6 *The Association*

As the validating body, the Association bears ultimate responsibility for the procedure as a whole. The Association ensures that the institutions abide by the agreements, that registration is carried out with care, that the competence certificates are in conformity, that the supervisors issue a report and that regular consultation is held between the Institutional RPL Coordinators, assessors and other relevant parties. The Association also provides the training for supervisors and assessors.

Clear procedures are agreed within the Association in order to safeguard the quality guarantees. For example, one important criterion is that every candidate is treated equally in the procedure, regardless of institution, faculty, department, teaching group or programme.

4 Phases and periods

Several phases are distinguished within the procedure. In order to keep the procedure manageable, the project group has chosen to offer the procedure twice each year, linking each phase to a specific period in the academic year: the spring procedure and the autumn procedure.

In addition, an institution may organise one or more additional procedures in order to meet specific needs or to account for differences in the organisation of education within particular programmes, departments, teaching groups or faculties.

The timing of the procedures must follow the minimum and maximum periods, as included in the document entitled 'Procedures and time frames'. This timing of RPL procedures relating to graduate programmes differs from the timing of those relating to Bachelor and Master programmes.

4.0 Guidance

The reception of candidates and the provision of general information about the procedure takes place in advance, throughout the entire academic year. All information concerning the RPL procedure is available on the Association's website www.auha.be/RPL. All of the documents included on the website apply to all institutions of the Association.

In order to ensure that candidates are on the right track, the institutions can refer to the Association's website.

4.1 Information and orientation

After requesting and studying the information, the candidate contacts the RPL supervisor to request an intake interview at least four weeks prior to the conclusion of the enrolment procedure. This guarantees that there will be time for a thorough, comprehensive approach to the procedure. The candidate will also be registered during this intake interview. Thereafter, the candidate can complete the application. Candidates who do not meet the general or exceptional conditions for admission to higher education will not be admitted to the RPL procedure.

This phase concludes with definitive enrolment in the procedure and payment of the administrative fees and examination expenses.

Bachelor and Master programmes

If a candidate wishes to have competences tested on programme components from the Bachelor or Master programmes, the following deadlines apply for enrolment and payment:

- For the spring procedure, before 1 March (in this procedure, the candidate must submit the request for the intake interview before 1 February)
- For the autumn procedure, before 1 October (in this procedure, the candidate must submit the request for the intake interview before 1 September)

Graduate programmes

If a candidate wishes to have competences tested on programme components from the graduate programmes, the following deadlines apply for enrolment and payment:

- For the spring procedure, before 15 February (in this procedure, the candidate must submit the request for the intake interview before 22 January)
- For the autumn procedure, before 1 October (in this procedure, the candidate must submit the request for the intake interview before 8 September)

4.2 Acknowledgement of prior learning

In this phase, the candidate selects the competences for which recognition is to be requested. The candidate prepares the portfolio with documents, testimonies, reflection and other elements, in accordance with the portfolio assignment. The candidate submits the portfolio to the supervisor before the deadline.

Bachelor and Master programmes

At least four weeks are allowed, in order to ensure that this task is prepared at the proper depth.

During this period, and no later than two weeks before the submission deadline for the portfolio, the candidate will have the opportunity to receive assistance/guidance from the RPL supervisor with regard to the formatting of the portfolio. The initiative is to be taken by the candidate, at least four weeks before the submission deadline. The timing included in this procedure guarantees that the candidate will have at least two weeks to complete the portfolio properly after receiving assistance/guidance.

The deadlines for requesting individual guidance in the formatting of the portfolio are as follows:

- For the spring procedure: 15 March, with guidance before 15 April

- For the autumn procedure: 15 October, with guidance before 15 November.

The submission deadlines for the portfolio are as follows:

- For the spring procedure: 1 May
- For the autumn procedure: 1 December

Candidates who have not paid for the procedure (cf. Section 4.1) will not be entitled to individual assistance and will not be admitted to the assessment interview.

Graduate programmes

The duration of this phase, in which candidates create and deliver their portfolios, is no more than four weeks.

During this period, the candidate will have the opportunity to receive assistance/guidance from the RPL supervisor with regard to the formatting of the portfolio. The candidate must request this one-time assistance, making an appointment at the time of enrolment.

Candidates who have not paid for the procedure (cf. Section 4.1) will not be entitled to individual assistance and will not be admitted to the assessment interview.

4.3 *Assessment*

After reviewing the application and the portfolio, the Assessment Committee may require a skills test prior to or in connection with the assessment interview.

The candidate will be invited for an assessment interview. This interview takes place in the form of a criterion-based interview. At least two weeks before this assessment interview, the candidate will be notified of the location, date and time of the assessment interview and, if applicable, the skills test. The Assessment Committee conducts the assessment interview and, if applicable, assesses the skills test.

The Assessment Committee formulates a decision, supported by argumentation, and makes it known to the candidate.

Bachelor and Master programmes

The deadline for the Assessment Committee's decision is as follows:

- For the spring procedure: 4 June
- For the autumn procedure: 30 January

Graduate programmes

The deadline for the assessment committee's decision is as follows:

- For the spring procedure: 30 April
- For the autumn procedure: 30 November

4.4 *Recognition of prior learning*

Formal recognition takes place through the registration and presentation of the decision on the competence procedure and a competence certificate.

Bachelor and Master programmes

The deadline for the presentation of the decision on the competence procedure and a competence certificate is as follows:

- For the spring procedure: 18 June
- For the autumn procedure: 15 February

Graduate programmes

Formal recognition takes place through the registration and presentation of the decision on the competence procedure and a competence certificate.

- For the spring procedure: 14 May
- For the autumn procedure: 14 December

4.5 *Objection to the decision of the Assessment Committee*

Candidates are provided with the opportunity to launch an objection procedure within the seven calendar days following the receipt of the decision on the aptitude test.

The processing of the objection procedure can last up to a maximum of 20 calendar days, including notification.

4.6 *Closing the procedure*

The file is closed and archived.

A candidate may conclude the process at any time by sending written notification to the Institutional RPL Coordinator.

If a candidate does not adhere to the time frames and/or agreements specified in the regulations with regard to registration, payment, submission of the portfolio or the assessment interview, the procedure will be closed by statute.

6 The candidate's file

After the end of the procedure, the candidate's complete RPL file should consist of the following documents:

- Registration form + Proof of competence form + Confirmation of payment
- 'Introduction to method' form
- 'Receipt of portfolio' form
- Decision by the Assessment Committee
- Decision on the aptitude test
- Copy of the competence certificate
- If applicable: decision on the internal appeals procedure
- Supporting documents, as needed, with regard to the sending/receipt of invitations and documents
- If applicable: notification from the candidate concerning the termination of the procedure
- If applicable: registration of termination of the procedure by statute

7 Quality assurance

The regulations specify the information that the institution must provide to the validating body within this procedure. This is done at least once each year, no later than 15 July.

The institutions are requested to notify the Association by stating the exemptions that they have granted based on a competence certificate.

8 Organisational chart of responsibilities

