

Recognition of Prior Learning Case Study

Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra – Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra

Type of recognition: Recognition of foreign degrees – Level and Automatic Recognition

Applicant: Students seeking to continue their studies in Portugal (e.g., pursuing a master's or doctoral program); individuals looking to enter the Portuguese labor market who need their degree recognized to apply for jobs.

Aim of recognition: This process evaluates a foreign degree and determines whether the degree, regardless of the field of study, corresponds to a particular academic level in the Portuguese system, such as a bachelor's, master's, or PhD. Unlike **Specific Recognition**, this process does not compare the degree to a specific Portuguese program but rather to its general academic level.

The process can be simpler and faster – Automatic Recognition - when it applies to degrees from institutions/programs that have been pre-approved by a national authority and deemed equivalent to corresponding levels in Portugal (see example in attachments LR.5. **Generic Ruling – Ukraine**). Degrees from countries within the Bologna Process or specific agreements are typically eligible.

Documents submitted by applicant *:

1. **Diploma/Degree Certificate:** A certified copy of the foreign degree, often translated into Portuguese by a certified translator.
2. **Transcript of Records:** A detailed list of all courses, grades, and credits earned in the foreign institution.
3. **Syllabus/Curriculum of Studies:** A breakdown of the program content, including learning outcomes and academic hours (to assess comparability).
4. **Proof of Accreditation:** Documentation proving that the foreign institution is accredited or recognized in its home country.
5. **Application Form for Recognition:** Submitted through a countrywide online platform.
6. **Supporting Documents:** Any additional documentation that may clarify the scope of studies (e.g., research work or theses, if applicable).

* For Automatic Recognition only 1; 4; 5 and 6 (if applicable) are needed:

Competent authorities where it can be request: Portuguese Public HEI through a platform managed by Directorate-General for HE.

The institution that offers the same/similar degree level to the one the applicant holds. The evaluation is handled by a nominated academic committee/Jury - (often the President of the Scientific Council and two professors from the field of study), who are responsible for reviewing the academic content and make recommendations. The final decision is made by the Head of the HEI (or in whom these affairs are delegated). In Automatic Recognition the academic committee/Jury is not needed (see below – Recognition procedure).

Recognition procedure:

1. **Submission of Application:** The applicant submits the required documents to the chosen Portuguese higher education institution. This is often done online.
2. **Initial Review of Documents:** The institution checks that all documents are in order and may request translations or additional materials if needed.

Automatic Recognition (if applicable):

1. **Eligibility Check:** Check if the foreign institution and the degree program are on a pre-approved list for automatic recognition. Degrees from **Bologna Process** countries or institutions with prior agreements may qualify.
2. **Recognition Decision:** If eligible, the degree is automatically recognized at the equivalent level (e.g., bachelor's, master's, PhD) without further evaluation.
3. **Issuance of Certificate:** Upon approval, the HEI issues an official document certifying the degree's recognition at the academic level.

If Automatic Recognition is not applicable:

3. **Detailed Academic Evaluation:** The nominated committee reviews the submitted documents and compares it to the Portuguese equivalent.
 - o Unlike **Specific Recognition**, the focus is on the general academic level of the degree rather than its course-by-course equivalence.
 - o The committee may use benchmarks such as academic credits, total workload, and duration of studies to ensure the degree matches Portuguese standards for that level (bachelor's, master's, or PhD).
4. **Comparative Analysis of the Degree:** The decision is based on the degree's general alignment with Portuguese academic levels.
5. **Specific Aspects:** For degrees outside the EU or countries without automatic recognition agreements, more scrutiny might be applied, including an evaluation of the issuing institution's standing and the academic structure.

Decision:

- **Full Recognition of Qualification:** The foreign degree is fully recognized as equivalent to the Portuguese degree level (e.g., a foreign bachelor's degree is recognized as a Portuguese bachelor's).
- **Non-Recognition:** In other cases, the degree may be denied recognition if it is not comparable to the Portuguese standard.

Academic and/or Professional Rights:

- **Full Recognition:** The applicant is granted the same academic rights as someone with a Portuguese degree. They may pursue further education or enter the labor market with the recognized qualification, although for certain regulated professions, Specific Recognition is the only recognition type accepted by those professions governing bodies.

Issued document:

- **Recognition Certificate:** Issued by the university or polytechnic, confirming the recognition of the degree.

Attachments:

LR.1. Online Form (from applicant point of view)

LR.2. Request received (from HEI point of view)

LR.3. Decision Process Overview

Three Levels (Initial assessment; Academic Recommendation and Final Ruling)

Level 1 – Initial Assessment - Administrative Office – Information Validation

Level 2 – Academic Recommendation - Academic Committee – Jury Decision;

Level 3 – Final Ruling - Head of HEI – Final Decision and Dispatch.

LR.4. Recognition Certificate example

LR.5. Generic Ruling – National Commission for The Recognition of Foreign Degrees - Ukraine