

Recognition of Prior Learning Case Study

Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra – Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra

Type of recognition: Recognition of foreign degrees – Specific 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 or other professionals aiming to validate their degree for specific employment opportunities or regulatory purposes, namely in the scope of regulated professions).

Aim of recognition: To establish equivalency of a foreign degree with a specific Portuguese academic degree and program. This may be necessary for:

- Pursuing further education.
- Entering a specific career or profession.
- Legal recognition of academic credentials.

This process evaluates a foreign degree in detail and determines whether it is equivalent to a specific Portuguese degree and program, in a specific subject or field of study. The HEI attests that the foreign degree is like the one it provides.

Documents submitted by applicant:

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

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 or a similar degree to the one the applicant holds. This institution manages the specific recognition process. 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 about the recognition decision. The final decision is made by the Head of the HEI (or in whom these affairs are delegated).

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.
3. **Detailed Academic Evaluation:** The nominated committee reviews the submitted documents and compares it to the Portuguese equivalent.
 - **Comparison of Syllabi and Learning Outcomes:** The evaluation focuses on how closely the applicant's coursework, learning outcomes, and credit load align with the Portuguese program.
 - **Recognition Tools Used:** This includes reviewing academic content, course equivalence, and sometimes, if deemed necessary, conducting examinations or requesting additional materials to clarify ambiguities.
4. **Comparative Analysis of the Degree:** The decision is based on how closely the foreign degree matches the curriculum and academic requirements of the equivalent Portuguese program.

Decision:

- **Full Recognition of Qualification:** The foreign degree is fully recognized as equivalent to the specific Portuguese degree (e.g., a foreign bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy is recognized as a Portuguese bachelor's in Physiotherapy).
- **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 and professional rights as someone with a Portuguese degree. They may pursue further education or enter the labor market with the recognized qualification.
- **Professional Licensing:** For certain regulated professions, Specific Recognition is only the first step. Further professional accreditation or examinations may be required by relevant bodies (e.g., for engineers, lawyers, or doctors).

Issued document: Document(s) issued to certify the decision (if applicable)

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

Attachments:

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

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

SR.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.

SR.4.Recognition Certificate example