



ASSOCIATIE UNIVERSITEIT GENT

RECOGNITION

PREVIOUSLY ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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Recognition of Previously Acquired Competencies Guide for Applicants

Contents

Recognition of Previously Acquired Competencies Guide for Applicants.....	2
2 Recognition of Previously Acquired Competencies Guide for Applicants.....	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 The Purpose of RPAC.....	6
2.3 RPAC or RPAQ.....	7
2.3.1 Previously Acquired Competencies (PAC).....	7
2.3.2 Previously Acquired Qualifications (PAQ).....	7
2.4 RPAC Simplified Procedure.....	8
2.4.1 Target Groups.....	8
2.4.2 Procedure.....	9
2.5 Do you Qualify?.....	10
2.6 Outcome of an RPAC Procedure.....	10
2.6.1 Certificate of Competency.....	10
2.6.2 Exemption through RPAC.....	11
2.7 Components of the Procedure.....	11
2.8 Guidance.....	11
2.8.1 Role of the Counsellor.....	11
2.8.2 Personal responsibility.....	12
2.9 Registration.....	12
2.10 Competency Assessment.....	13
2.10.1 Course of the Competency Analysis.....	13
2.10.2 Methods.....	13
2.10.3 Result of the Competency Assessment.....	15
2.11 Recognition.....	15
2.12 Costs.....	16
2.13 Appeal.....	16
2.14 Final Considerations.....	17
2.15 Contacts.....	18
3 Manual portfolio.....	19

3.1	Introduction.....	19
3.2	The Components of a Portfolio.....	20
3.2.1	General Information on the Cover Page.....	20
3.2.2	Curriculum Vitae.....	20
3.2.3	List of Competencies with Supporting Documents.....	20
3.2.4	Supporting Documents.....	20
3.2.5	Criteria for Evidence	21
3.2.6	Overview of Possible Evidence.....	22
3.2.7	Evidence in other languages	23
3.3	Confidentiality	24
4	Formats portfolio.....	25
5	Formats portfolio.....	25

Recognition of Previously Acquired Competencies

Guide for Applicants

1.1 Introduction

Flemish Higher Education has become more flexible over the last decades. Students are able to plan their study trajectory more individually and make use of their relevant experiences, the *Previously Acquired Competencies* (PAC), to optimise that trajectory. University colleges and universities can take into consideration skills and knowledge which were learned or developed at the workplace, during social activities, or through volunteer work. A procedure was designed for the recognition of these competencies (RPAC). If you consider yourself eligible for a recognition of your skills, then this Guide will provide you with the necessary information.

The RPAC procedure is the responsibility (of the Accrediting Body) of Ghent University Association (AUGent). For the implementation, AUGent relies on the expertise of its partner institutions: Arteveldehogeschool (Artevelde university of applied sciences), HOGENT (HOGENT university of applied sciences), Howest hogeschool (Howest university of applied sciences) and Universiteit Gent (Ghent University). Each institution is a Mandated Body and assigns one or several mandated persons. The procedure applies to all institutions within AUGent.

This guide is intended as an aid for presenting your competencies clearly and transparently in a format which allows the assessors to make a fair evaluation of your application. The basis for any assessment are the competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) you already possess.

Most students consider applying for the RPAC procedure with the aim of receiving an exemption for a course or a part of the study programme. It is important to note here that the RPAC procedure can only lead to an exemption indirectly. Granting exemptions is not part of the RPAC procedure, and is entirely in the hands of the faculties or departments.

The approach towards recognising skills and granting exemptions depends to some extent on how study programmes are organised. This accounts for differences between or within institutions or faculties. In order to receive an exemption on the basis of practical experience, however, it is always necessary to go through the RPAC procedure.

It is also possible to receive exemptions if you have already taken a similar course in another training programme and/or in another accredited educational institution. In these cases the RPAC procedure is not necessary and you can apply directly through the *Recognition of Acquired Qualifications* (RPAQ) procedure. The difference between the RPAC and RPAQ procedures is explained in chapter 3.

The different institutions of AUGent will gladly assist you in the design of a study programme. This Guide can help to determine whether the recognition of your previously acquired competencies can be part of it.

We are pleased to announce a new possibility that enters in a testing phase from academic year 2022-2023 onwards: the Simplified Procedure. This adaptation aims at releasing the burden in specific cases in the RPAC procedure for both candidates and institutions. The condition remains that each procedure meets the quality standards.

The traditional procedure is now referred to as the 'Standard Procedure'.

1.2 The Purpose of RPAC

The knowledge and the skills required to function in society are changing fast. It is therefore necessary that everyone continues to learn, also long after leaving formal education. Higher education wants to be accessible for students with several years of experience in the field as well as for students who decide to continue studies in the same, a related, or even a completely different field. The intention of RPAC is to recognise the value of prior learning and use this to optimise (i.e. shorten or make leaner) the study package. RPAC can thereby lower the threshold to continued Higher Education.

Through the RPAC procedure, relevant experience can be recognised as one or more competencies which are specified in a Certificate of Competency. Competencies can be interpreted differently depending on the programme for which an RPAC procedure is started. Especially the extent to which knowledge is part of these competencies varies widely. For example, in academic courses knowledge will be a more important element than in professional training.

It should be kept in mind that these competencies can be achieved in different ways. Firstly, there are competencies which are developed in a real learning environment, for example, training followed at a labour counselling service centre, an entrepreneurial training, or a training at a socio-cultural organisation. Secondly, there are competencies which can also be acquired in a more spontaneous manner. This includes experience acquired in the workplace, as a volunteer, or by means of other activities in daily life. That could include for example, a thorough knowledge of a foreign language due to several years of living abroad, or experience in working with different computer programs. Skills acquired in an official learning environment have the best chance to be recognised, especially if their practical application can be demonstrated.

The RPAC procedure is not an alternative form of examination. If you have acquired certain skills only through self-study without any concrete application, we recommend that you consider an exam contract for this specific part of your course. RPAC is only intended for competencies which you have acquired in practice, or which offer significant application possibilities in a practical situation, and for which you also have the necessary supporting documents.

When selecting the competencies which you wish to have recognised by the Accrediting Body of AUGent, it is recommended to take into account which competencies are relevant for the module for which you would like to get an exemption. Alternatively, these can also be competencies which relate to the entire programme.

The RPAC file must therefore be drawn up on the basis of competencies required for the module and/or competencies required for the whole training programme.

The final result of the RPAC procedure is a certificate confirming these competencies. This document will only be effective for your studies if you request the university (college) to be exempted for all or part of a module or course unit. It is therefore advisable to be selective about the competencies you want to have recognised, and to base your selection on the training objectives.

1.3 RPAC or RPAQ

As an applicant, you usually have a clear idea of the experience you possess, but the intention is to make this transparent for the assessors. In order to do so, when mapping your skills, i.e. listing your experiences and relating documents, you will need to consider carefully whether the collected information relates to RPAC (Recognition of Previously Acquired Competencies) or rather to RPAQ (Recognition of Previously Acquired Qualifications).

This is important as the procedure for RPAC differs from that for RPAQ. In practice, this means that all documents (for instance certificates of courses, diplomas from a foreign university, and reports of employers) must be classified according to this subdivision. If you decide that certain documents are suitable for RPAQ, then you must first contact the relevant institution.

1.3.1 Previously Acquired Competencies (PAC)

According to the Codex Higher Education, PAC must be understood as the entirety of knowledge, insight, skills, and attitudes acquired through learning processes, that are not ratified by study certificates.

This can involve any number of things: the experience you gained in a company, a computer program you learned to use, a report from your employer which demonstrates that you are very competent in performing statistical analysis, or a course that you have taken at an industrial training centre, to give a few examples.

All these competencies can be recognised via the RPAC procedure if you are able to collect sufficient information to convince the assessors that you have indeed mastered these skills.

1.3.2 Previously Acquired Qualifications (PAQ)

PAQ is often defined as a 'domestic or foreign study certificate indicating that a formal learning trajectory, whether or not in education, was followed with a positive outcome (this certificate cannot be achieved within the institution and study programme for which the applicant wishes to use the qualification)'.

This includes, for example, diplomas or certificates obtained at a domestic or foreign educational institution or a centre for adult education, at home or abroad. These institutions must be formally recognised as such.

With PAQ, you can directly apply for exemptions. Evidence obtained from non-approved organisations can be included in an RPAC file.

Summary - the Distinction between RPAC and RPAQ

Answer the following question: 'Was this evidence obtained from a recognised institution (i.e. recognised by a department or ministry of education or an accrediting body)?'

The following rule of thumb applies:

- The evidence was obtained from a recognised institution: submit as RPAQ
- The evidence was not obtained from a recognised institution: submit as RPAC.

If you find that certain evidence does not relate to RPAQ, please proceed to the RPAC procedure.

In case of doubt whether or not a certain study programme or training is classified as RPAC or RPAQ, please contact your RPAC counsellor.

1.4 RPAC Two Procedures

Besides the General Procedure there is since 202-2023 a Simplified Procedure in development. The 'RPAC Simplified' refers to reduction of effort for certain parts of the current procedure. It involves a limited number of specific target groups. We clarify this further below.

Academic year 2022-2023 is a transition year and considered to be a period of testing. That means that not all target groups can be reached by each institution. The choice will be announced by the institution itself and communicated to the candidates.

For this specific application we introduce a specific limitation. The total of competencies to be recognized on the basis of the Simplified Procedure within the frame of the same training programme is not allowed to exceed an accumulated maximum of 18 credits (as maximum for recognition and for exemptions).

'Accumulated' means both combined target groups as well as consecutive applications in time. And this for the whole of Ghent University Association, that is for all partner institutions.

For more complex applications or requests including multiple purposes the Standard Procedure remains the indicated track.

1.4.1 Target Groups

1.4.1.1 *Students that want to prove only linguistic competencies*

The first target group consists of students that have acquired a high level of multilingualism due to their life situation (e.g., multilanguage education, stay abroad, other country of origin, ...). Recognition of multilingualism means that they can provide evidence of linguistic competencies on an elementary, more profound and/or finalizing level.

Next are students that have developed linguistic competencies of sufficient level for the domain of the new training programme by means of an earlier attended Bachelor programme but could not certify this on the basis of a credit certificate in the RPAQ-procedure.

In a shortened model trajectory, one starts on the basis of the learning results on finalizing levels. The aim is to guarantee that all diplomas or certificates provided meet with the highest level. Exemptions for linguistic course units on an elementary or more profound level are always included in a shortened trajectory.

The recognition of domain specific linguistic competencies of students coming from other course programmes indicates that they are entitled to demonstrate also linguistic competencies on a finalizing level.

1.4.1.2 *Students able to prove competencies on learning target level (and not on the level of learning outcomes)*

Learning outcomes or finalizing competencies are the basis of all curricula. There are also programmes in which partial competencies are building stones. Other programmes work with learning targets. The leading principle is that each learning outcome builds up to the final level in a systematic way by means of learning targets on different levels of complexity.

RPAC Simplified is becoming of value in the latter situation when students already acquired certain learning targets on a certain level (but not the final level) of competence development and strive for a Certificate of Competency. This enables to request for exemptions for course elements that precede finalizing course units (known as OLODs).

RPAC Simplified cannot be applied for finalizing course units. For that purpose we refer to the Standard Procedure.

1.4.1.3 *Students able to prove extra engagements*

RPAC Simplified allows AUGent to provide for a new target group: students that have or are taking up an extra engagement and acquire in that way competencies on the level of higher education (EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8). Both engagements either within the university or university of applied sciences, or within a broader society framework can be recognized as long as there is a clear link to the higher education setting.

Some examples: student representatives, students engaged in summer courses, students tutoring for fellow students, students engaged in role model activities, students committed to the support of international students, ...

By means of RPAC Simplified they can prove to have specific competencies. If confirmed by a Certificate of Competency exemptions can be granted for certain course units, especially those containing generic competencies.

If the institution provides for this, the Certificate can be complemented or included in a recognised "badge" and/or be situated in a "badge" trajectory. An acquired badge is of course also the basis for recognition in the frame of RPAC.

The basic principles and procedures for granting "badges" are part of the internal regulations of the institutions.

1.4.2 **Procedure**

By contrast to the Standard Procedure the process of RPAC Simplified consists of:

- Counselling at the start of the procedure to verify if the applicant meets the criteria for RPAC Simplified
- No portfolio: direct planning of an interview, test or reflection
- Assessment by minimum 1 person.

Applicants that meet all entrance conditions and are effective students of a training programme of the institution are exempted for the fee that normally applies to the RPAC procedure.

In principle there are the same fixed moments of the Standard Procedure (April 1st and November 1st). Exceptions can be granted for substantiated arguments

Be advised that within the RPAC Simplified Procedure there is no appeal possible against the decision of the counsellor regarding access to the Simplified procedure.

1.5 Do you Qualify?

The RPAC procedure does not impose any requirements regarding the number of years of work experience that you must have, the number of courses attended, or the scope of additional training followed. However, as with regular enrolment in higher education, you will have to comply with the general admission conditions for higher education. These can be found in the education and examination regulations of the specific institution of Ghent University Association in which you hope to enrol.

If you do not comply with these terms and conditions, access to higher education is still possible through the alternative admission procedure. Please refer to:

- *AUGent Alternative Admission Procedure for English Bachelor Programmes of AUGent Institutions*
- *Alternative Admission Procedure for Dutch unaware candidates for the School of Arts academic Bachelor Programmes or*
- *Toelatingsonderzoek: Gids voor de Aanvrager (Alternative Admission: Guide for the Applicant, only available in Dutch, for admission to Dutch Bachelor or Associate Degree Programmes.*

All documents can be found on www.augent.be.

1.6 Outcome of an RPAC Procedure

When you have successfully completed an RPAC procedure, you will receive a Certificate of Competency, but not (yet) an exemption. Possible exemption(s) for certain modules or course units can only be obtained later, on the basis of this certificate of competency. The final approval of an exemption is at the discretion of the department or faculty.

1.6.1 Certificate of Competency

The Certificate of Competency is the result of a successful completion of the RPAC procedure and is the official proof of your ability in certain areas. It clearly states which competencies are attested by the Accrediting Body of AUGent. Competencies which were not recognised by the competence validation will not be listed on the Certificate.

The RPAC regulation refers to validity within an entire association. This means that a Certificate of Competency issued by AUGent will be valid at the institutions which are part of the Ghent University Association: Ghent University, University of Applied Sciences Ghent, Artevelde University of Applied Sciences Ghent and University of Applied sciences West Flanders. Although the certificates are of value in general, it cannot be guaranteed, however, that institutions outside of the association will recognise AUGent Certificate.

Within the context of AUGent, you will be able to use your Certificate of Competency only for the study programme for which the procedure or research is carried out. Competencies are often related to a specific study programme. For example, a competency which was recognised in the context of programme A, does not necessarily result in the same recognition for programme B. If you wish to follow another study programme, you may be able to use your certificate, but often you will have to submit a new application.

In principle, your Certificate of Competency has an unlimited validity within AUGent.

1.6.2 Exemption through RPAC

The application for an exemption is not part of the RPAC procedure. You can apply for an exemption on the basis of PAC, but only after completing the RPAC procedure, i.e. after a Certificate of Competency has been issued.

It is the department or faculty that decides which exemption(s) you are granted on the basis of one or more Certificates of Competency. An exemption means that (part of) a module or course unit from your study programme will be deleted from your personal study track. As a result, your study load is reduced. Moreover, no fees are required for the exempted module(s) or course unit(s).

The procedure for obtaining an exemption may vary by institution and sometimes even by study programme. Please consult the institution at which you wish to enroll.

1.7 Components of the Procedure

The RPAC procedure consists of five components. Completing the procedure will hopefully lead to a partial or full recognition of your competencies.

The components are the following:

1. guidance
2. registration
3. competency assessment
4. recognition
5. follow-up.

1.8 Guidance

This component is strongly recommended, but it is not obligatory.

The central person with whom you will establish contact during this phase is the RPAC counsellor who is connected to the relevant institution or study programme.

1.8.1 Role of the Counsellor

The counsellor can support you by:

- Clarifying the procedure, based on the information from the RPAC-Guide.
Which steps will you have to go through? Which information will you need to collect? What is the result of the procedure? How long will it take?
- Informing you about the procedure.
*The counsellor will inform you about the various methods that can be used during the competencies assessment.
The mandated person has a list of which technique(s) must be applied to each competency: for certain competencies the portfolio must be supplemented by a reflection file, practical test, and/or competence-based interview.*
- Helping you to determine if an RPAQ procedure is possible.
Can I use my study certificate to start an RPAQ procedure?

- Giving advice on the composition of a portfolio.
A manual is available for the composition of the portfolio. Any additional questions can be answered by the counsellor.
- Providing information on the procedure for the entrance examination in case of deviating or additional conditions of admission.
- Providing information on the procedure for obtaining exemptions, or referring you to the appropriate office.
If you still want to start an RPAQ procedure, or if you have obtained your certificate of competency and you wish to apply for an exemption, the counsellor can help you.

Guidance can be especially relevant at the beginning of the procedure, but it can also play an important role later on. During the procedure, however, the counsellor will only be able to tell you in which stage the application is. This allows you to follow the course of the procedure step by step.

1.8.2 Personal responsibility

- The counsellor will not take any decisions for you.
The counsellor gives advice which you may or may not follow. You remain personally responsible. The advice of the counsellor is not in itself a sufficient argument in a possible appeal.
- Do not expect the counsellor to compose your portfolio.
The counsellor is not a tutor or teacher who guides you through a learning process. The counsellor only assists you to map the competencies you already have so that the assessors can make a proper judgement. Do not expect the counsellor to gather evidence for you.
- It is not the duty of the counsellor to edit your texts (regarding form or content).
- Do not expect the counsellor to predict whether the competencies will be recognised or not.
The conversations with the counsellor will be mostly of an advisory nature. The counsellor may indicate whether your learning and working experiences are relevant in the light of the assessment standards of a particular module, but this should not be interpreted as part of the decision.
The counsellor will help you as much as possible to have your skills or competencies recognised. However, he or she will not make the final decision and will not be contacted by the assessors.
A counsellor is generally well informed about past RPAC files, but cannot influence the assessors' decision.

1.9 Registration

Registration is mandatory. Please proceed in accordance with the practical arrangements of the relevant institution. Usually, you must register in person. In some cases it is possible to register electronically. Further information can be found on the website of the institution.

At the first meeting, you will be given all information on the procedure. If necessary, an RPAC guide and/or format for the portfolio will be provided. You will have to submit an application file consisting of two pre-structured documents:

- *An RPAC application form (F-RPA-01) to be completed with*
 - Personal information
 - The study programme for which you want to start the procedure
 - The documents which prove that you meet the admission requirements

- The competencies which you want to have recognised.
- *Your portfolio* (forms F-RPA-02, 03, 04, and 05, and evidence).

You can submit your application on any working day during the academic year. All AUGent partner institutions, however, apply the same deadlines, viz. on 1 April and 1 November.

Next the procedure is started. Within six weeks after the next deadline following your registration, you will receive a message if and for which competencies you will receive a Certificate of Competency. Student holidays are suspending the terms. The mandated person (MIP) is allowed to shift the deadline or extend the processing period when motivated. In that case you will be informed of that fact.

The registration becomes official only after confirmation of payment of the fees.

From the moment you register, you enter into a contractual obligation or agreement with AUGent, and your application will be included in a registry.

1.10 Competency Assessment

The competency assessment is a mandatory part of the procedure which follows the registration phase.

This assessment forms the core of the RPAC procedure. The competencies which have been indicated on the registration form are examined to establish whether they can be recognised. The assessors will decide if the documents and evidence in your portfolio sufficiently demonstrate that you have mastered the relevant competencies.

1.10.1 Course of the Competency Analysis

The competence analysis can be subdivided into two steps:

- in the AUGent procedures all candidates must submit a portfolio.
- the portfolio can be supplemented by one of the following techniques: a reflection file, a competency-based interview, or a capability test. The mandated body or person (MIP) determines which assessment method should be applied for every competency and then informs the counsellor. If different forms of assessment are suggested and the assessors do not come to an agreement, an additional form of assessment will be put forward. Usually this additional assessment is determined by the MIP, independent of the individual file.

1.10.2 Methods

To investigate your application the assessors will examine your portfolio based on the requested competencies and possibly apply one or more of the following methods: reflection file, competency-based interview, or capability test.

1.10.2.1 *The Portfolio*

The portfolio is the main document of your application in the Standard Procedure. It is the opportunity for you to provide evidence regarding your competencies. For every competency you claim, you are asked to give an overview of your learning and working experiences: which skills have you effectively mastered? In short, you must compile a folder of evidence (for instance evaluation reports, models, papers, training certificates not related to RPAQ) which will demonstrate that you have sufficient relevant experience regarding the different competencies.

1.10.2.1.1 How to Create a Portfolio

A template is available for the portfolio, and also for a possible additional reflection file. In the manual you can find the list of documents you need for the composition of your portfolio, as well as instructions and tips.

1.10.2.1.2 Submission

The portfolio is to be submitted to the department or faculty either in three hard copies, delivered directly to the institution in person or electronically (if allowed by the department or faculty).

The method depends on the institution of your choice.

1.10.2.1.3 Portfolio Assessment

At least two assessors will give their independent opinion on each of your competencies. The assessors are experts on the contents of the study programme. They work either in the professional field or at the department. They will determine the value of the documents which you have submitted.

Several assessors may be involved in the process, especially if you have applied for the recognition of multiple competencies.

During the assessment of the portfolio, the assessors do not exchange information. They each make a report of the analysis they have conducted. Only in case of doubt or differences in conclusions there will be a consultation to establish consensus.

First, the evidence will be checked for authenticity and relevance. Documents that do not meet the standards will no longer be included in the procedure and will not be considered by the assessors. Two other criteria, variety and quantity, apply to the whole set of evidence. More information about the criteria can be found in the manual.

1.10.2.2 *The Reflection File*

You may be asked to provide a reflection file (in the Standard Procedure in addition to the portfolio) to prove certain competencies. In this reflection file you must demonstrate that you are able to connect what you have learned through (work) experience with the requirements of the study programme for that competency.

A template of the reflection file is available.

1.10.2.3 *The Competency-based Interview*

Certain skills cannot be judged on the basis of a portfolio as it is difficult to demonstrate them solely on the basis of a document, description, report, or artistic object. These competencies need to be demonstrated in a different way.

The competency-based interview should be viewed as an addition to and/or elaboration of the portfolio in the Standard Procedure. Within RPAC Simplified it is a possible basis for assessment.

During the interview, the assessor will question you about your skills in a structured way, based on the information you provided in the portfolio. You are not meant to add any new arguments or evidence. Although it is possible to expand on your skills, the basic information should be present in the portfolio.

You will be asked for concrete examples to illustrate you have mastered the skills. The intention is to create a specific and accurate picture of the nature of your competencies.

You can only prepare for the competency-based interview by rereading the portfolio and by thinking about possible questions the assessors may ask to determine whether you really have mastered the skills you indicated. The interview will be conducted by at least two assessors.

1.10.2.4 The Capability Test

The capability test may take a variety of formats, depending on your competency: for example, it may be a simulation assignment, a case study, or a knowledge test.

For some modules it is more likely that you will be required to take such a test, for example to demonstrate that you have mastered the skills required to run an experiment or to perform a medical act.

The capability test is not an examination on the objectives of a module or course unit. It is intended to investigate to what extent you can effectively perform the competencies described in your portfolio (if possible in a realistic situation).

Be aware that regardless of the possibility of a test, the portfolio should still include some evidence for each of the competencies for which you need to pass a capacity test. A capability test will only be organised if the portfolio demonstrates that you may possess the required competency.

1.10.3 Result of the Competency Assessment

On the basis of the performed assessment, one of the following decisions is made:

- It is sufficiently demonstrated that the applicant has mastered the competency: the competency is recognised.
- It is not sufficiently demonstrated: the competency is not recognised.

The mandated body or person (MIP) presents a report that provides an overview of all examined competencies with the indication whether they are recognised. In case of a negative result, brief feedback will be provided. Additionally, this report will state the assessment method(s) for every competency.

1.11 Recognition

Recognition of your competencies consists of the issuing of a certificate on behalf of the relevant recognised institution.

This means that the formal Certificate of Competency and the report of the MIP are not the same. The report is a list of all competencies for which you started the RPAC procedure, and states whether they have been recognised. The Certificate of Competency is an official document: it is the final document of the RPAC procedure and includes a list of the recognised competencies.

Within six weeks after the next deadline (exceptions have been indicated above), you will normally receive a message stating which competencies have been recognised and a copy of the report from the MIP. If applicable, you will be invited to collect the Certificate of Competency in person.

After obtaining a Certificate of Competency, you can contact the institution at which you have enrolled, and apply for exemptions.

1.12 Costs

The following table shows the cost of an RPAC procedure in a number of different situations. In all cases there is a 55 euro basic administrative cost. The total amount must be paid in full during the registration phase. Be advised that payment of the fee does not guarantee recognition of the competencies for which you have applied.

RPAC procedure	Fee
1. Recognition of a number of competencies for an Associate Degree, Bachelor and/or a Master programme	€155
2. Recognition of all competencies for an Associate Degree programme	€335
3. Recognition of all competencies for a Bachelor programme	€590
4. Recognition of all competencies for a Master programme (without underlying Bachelor's degree)	€770
5. Recognition of all competencies of a Master programme with a relevant Bachelor degree (leading to immediate access to the Master's programme)	€350

For applicants allowed to use the Simplified Procedure there is exemption of the fees.

1.13 Appeal

If you do not agree with the decision regarding the recognition of your competencies and you think you have justifiable grounds, you can appeal to the Accrediting Body.

Please first contact the RPAC counsellor. He/she will be able to give you more detailed information on the content of the Certificate of Competency, the report, and the progress of your RPAC procedure.

If after a consultation with your RPAC counsellor, you are still convinced that the procedure was not carried out properly, you can consider lodging an appeal. It is important to note here that there is a strict deadline for this action. Your letter of appeal to the Secretary of the Accrediting Body of AUGent must be sent no later than five calendar days, counting the day after your receipt of the results. Please address this letter to AUGent, Apotheekstraat 1, 9000 Ghent. The letter must be sent by registered mail isor submitted in person.

The Secretary of the Accrediting Body examines the admissibility/validity of the appeal. The Accrediting Body can contact the appellant if the motivation for the appeal is insufficiently clear. If appropriate, the counsellor, the assessors and/or other relevant persons can also be contacted.

Within two weeks you will receive a written confirmation (usually by e-mail), stating whether your appeal meets the requirements. If this is the case, then action will have to be taken by the higher education institution.

If the request for appeal is considered valid, the Secretary will request the assessors to deliberate again, taking into account any additional information provided by the appellant.

The assessors may decide to:

- revise their earlier decision and recognise the competencies
- reject the application for recognition
- in case of doubt, invite the applicant to perform certain parts of the competency assessment for a second time. In this case, when there is more than one assessor for the assessment of the same competency a second deliberation is necessary to reach a final verdict. As a result, the decision deadline can be suspended.

All registered internal appeals lead either to a confirmation of the original decision or to a revision.

The decision is executed by the institution to which the RPAC-application has been submitted.

The entire appeal procedure must be completed within twenty-one calendar days after the request for appeal has been granted. This period may be extended if there is a reasonable cause. In that event you will be notified.

In case of the Standard Procedure it is not allowed to submit an adapted portfolio for the appeal procedure. The appeal is treated solely on the basis of the original portfolio.

Each candidate can request the attendance of an observer at one of the stages of the appeal procedure. It is up to the Accrediting Body to determine whom it appoints. Usually this is one of the members of the Accrediting Body or the Secretary, and always someone who can act independently.

If you do not agree with the way your complaint was handled, you can submit the file to the Council for Disputes Concerning Decisions on Study Progress ('Raad voor Betwistingen inzake Studievoortgangsbepalingen'). Further information:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/raad/default.htm>

(Raad voor Betwistingen inzake Studievoortgangsbepalingen, p/a Dienst van de Bestuursrechtscolleges, Koning Albert II-laan 35 bus 81 1030 Brussel ¹;

info.studievoortgangsbetwistingen@vlaanderen.be).

Complaints or evidence can only be accepted by the Council if transferred by means of a registered deposit, viz. either a registered mail, a personal deposit at the above mentioned office or an electronic deposit at the digital counter.

As exemptions on the basis of RPAC are not part of this procedure, an appeal against the decision of the department or faculty regarding exemptions should not be addressed to this body.

1.14 Final Considerations

The concept of recognition of previously acquired competencies has a wide range of applications. In Flanders, there are RPAC initiatives aimed at specific professional groups and other RPAC procedures will undoubtedly emerge in the future. RPAC as described in this Guide only relates to the competencies and objectives that are common to Flemish higher education at the universities of applied sciences and universities. This Guide is primarily intended for applicants who have already enrolled as a student or plan to do so.

¹ Mail sent to his address is automatically scanned and transferred digitally to the addressee. It enables the Flemish authorities to handle its files digitally. Mail marked 'confidential' will not be scanned but transferred unopened to the addressee.

RPAC in higher education is the responsibility of the associations, but the assessment is carried out by the departments or faculties. The Accrediting Body, however, strives to guarantee a uniform standard of quality for the procedures.

The RPAC regulations are constantly evolving. This RPAC Guide can therefore only be used for a limited period. The RPAC counsellors, however, are well-informed about the most recent developments and will therefore be able to advise you.

The partner institutions of AUGent are looking forward to welcome you as a student. We are convinced that your experience can be a valuable asset to our learning community.

1.15 Contacts

Every institution of AUGent has a designated member of staff. Data are to be found on the respective websites and the website of AUGent.

2 Manual portfolio

2.1 Introduction

You are at the start of a RPAC procedure. General information about the procedure can be found in the RPAC Guide. It contains all basic information such as the steps in the procedure, support and the costs.

The portfolio is the main document in your procedure. It allows you to demonstrate that you possess the competencies that you hope to have recognized. This manual provides the necessary information and documents for you to compose a portfolio.

In general "portfolio" just means a folder in which documents are kept. Translated to the RPAC procedure, you create a file giving evidence of the competencies that you want to show. It is not done randomly, the portfolio is not just a collector's folder. It is essential that you have the evidence presented in a specific way and that you reflect about the supporting documents.

The first part of this document is a manual designed to give you guidance to perform that task. Although you are personally responsible for the contents and design of your portfolio, when in doubt or in case a problem arises, please contact your RPAC counsellor.

The second part of this document is the collection of the formats that you have to use for your portfolio. Your portfolio includes basically the following documents: a Curriculum Vitae, the list of competencies that you wish to have recognised and relevant supporting documents.

When registering for the procedure, you must deliver three copies of your portfolio, including at least one containing all the original documents. For electronic registration, contact the institutional advisor.

2.2 The Components of a Portfolio

Below you will find a list of the components of your portfolio that you need to complete, how to do so and why. Where necessary, some suggestions are given.

2.2.1 General Information on the Cover Page

On the cover page, general information must be provided such as your name, the date of your request and the intended programme of studies.

2.2.2 Curriculum Vitae

In the Curriculum Vitae format (form 1) you provide relevant background information about yourself, such as an overview of your training, work experiences and leisure activities. The purpose of the Curriculum Vitae is to provide the assessors all the necessary information so that they are able to position the supporting documents and your reflection in a broader context.

2.2.3 List of Competencies with Supporting Documents

The intention of this list (form 2) is to provide an overview of all competencies that you want to have recognised and for which you consequently also will enter the necessary evidence.

You have started an RPAC procedure because you wish to be exempted for a (part of a) course. It is self-evident that you substantiate the competencies related to those courses in your portfolio. Note the competencies that you want to have recognized (*column 2*) and assign them each a corresponding code (*column 1*).

The required competencies can be found in the ECTS indexes of the programmes. These can easily be consulted. You can also contact the Student Administration Office or department in order to browse the course materials and/or the exams of the last two exam periods. This can be of help for you to describe the competency and to get a clearer picture on the criteria used in the evaluation.

2.2.4 Supporting Documents

It is also obvious that you should file clear evidence in your portfolio to allow the assessors to ascertain that the competence is based on reality. Be aware that they are vital elements on which your success in the RPAC procedure depends.

The supporting documents could also be items that you produced at work and that clearly show your skills. It can also be direct or indirect testimonies that illustrate your experience.

Each competency must be confirmed by at least two and maximum four supporting documents. You should give each piece of evidence a number and a title or a short description.

Use *column 1* to give numbers to the corresponding supporting documents.
In *column 2* you enter a title or brief description of that evidence.

You can submit one piece of evidence for several competencies. If this is the case, give the original number that you have given at the first entry in the table. See below for the criteria for supporting documents and which documents can be submitted as evidence.

The total number of supporting documents shall not exceed four times the number of competencies that you want to have recognized. Please be advised that an extremely bulky file hampers the readability and it may become confusing for the assessors.

When compiling the portfolio try to have a good picture of what kind of experiences are important for the competencies. Select carefully and only enter relevant documents. Order the documents to a clear and logically structured set. Be clear in what the assessors should read, hear or view. Emphasize relevant passages.

2.2.5 Criteria for Evidence

Each piece of evidence must at least comply with the criteria of authenticity and relevance. If these are not being met, the evidence will not be taken into account. The criteria variation and quantity apply to the whole of the supporting documents.

2.2.5.1 Authenticity

The documentary evidence may not be a fake, it must be really reliable, beyond any doubt submitted by those persons the document mentions (employer, foundation, ...).

Is there a signature of that person or stamp of the organisation?

Does the documentary evidence show that you have gone through a learning process in a real world (working) situation? Does it reflect in a clear way the experience and expertise you gained?

The evidence must demonstrate that it is not just simply skills that you have acquired by self-study, they also have to be applied in practice.

Some specific questions:

- Does the evidence provide a fair picture of your experiences, capabilities?
- Is it clear who is the author or source of the document and if there is a signature, does it undoubtedly belong to the signatory?

2.2.5.2 Relevance

Does the exhibit really connect with the competency you want to show?

Specific question:

- Does the evidence prove that you really possess the competency?

To what extent does the evidence clearly show that you master the competence today?

Specific questions:

- How did the competency develop/change in the period to which the documentary evidence relates?
- Does the exhibit show to what extent you currently really master the competency?
- When you want to add in documents of a less recent date, how do you prove that you still master the competency today?

2.2.5.3 Variety of contexts

Do the documents indicate that the competency is being applied in different situations?

Specific question:

- Did/do you use your competencies for different tasks or assignments?

2.2.5.4 *Quantity*

Does the evidence clearly show how long and how intensively you have developed the competency?

Specific questions:

- How many months, years, ... of practical use of the competency can you prove with this exhibit?
- Does the evidence say something about how frequently you have used that specific competency?

2.2.6 *Overview of Possible Evidence*

A portfolio must be composed of evidence that should convince the assessor that you actually possess a certain competency. Hence, it usually includes a broad range of documents such as reports, certificates or contracts.

In general, we can subdivide the evidence in three large groups:

- formal information
- standardised information
- other materials (materials for which some form of interpretation is needed).

2.2.6.1 *Formal information*

Evidence	Requirements
Diploma	Official diploma, with clear indication of the different courses. <i>Note: diplomas not belonging to RPAQ²</i>
Exam results	Official documents with a clear description of the content of relevant courses. <i>Note: exam results not belonging to RPAQ</i>
Certificates	Official documents with a clear description of the training institution and the content of the training/course. <i>Note: certificates not belonging to RPAQ</i>
Testimonials	Official documents with a clear description of the training institution and the content of the training/course. <i>Note: certificates not belonging to RPAQ</i>
Contracts	Certified documents from employers with a clear job description and overview of tasks that you perform(ed), as well as the period. Also add a reference of the employer (preferably an immediate superior).
Internship report and evaluation	Signed documents by the supervisors both at the school and on the internship with a clear description of the practical interpretation of the placement and the tasks you served as an intern. You include the period, as well as a reference of the counsellors and add a copy of the internship report.
Proof of internal training	Official certificate of internal training with a clear description of the content of the programme and the objectives pursued.
...	...

2.2.6.2 *Standardised information*

Within this category, evidence is included that relates to specific competencies or skills.

² See RPAC Guide for the difference between RPAC (Recognition of Previously Acquired Competencies) and RPAQ (Recognition of Previously Acquired Qualifications)

Evidence	Requirements
Assessment interviews	Report of the evaluation or appraisal interviews at a previous employer or in the context of an internship or training.
Projects	A detailed description of the content of the project and your specific task. Official documents that clearly show that you have contributed to the project. Include a report and reference data from a supervisor or other staff.
Volunteering at an official organisation	Duly signed documents of the organization with a clear description of the job content and tasks that you performed, as well as the period. Include reference data of the person(s) in charge within the organization.
Manufactured products/work/ essays/presentations ...	Relevant projects that have a clear link with the competency you want to prove. Proof that you are the (co-)producer of the products /work ...
Video footage / photos/audio recordings/...	Audio-visual evidence of you acting in a real professional situation, relevant or related to the competency.
Reports	Reports of activities or projects that shed light on your tasks
Websites	If you have designed websites, you can supply the URLs and add documents that show the extent to which you were involved in the design and implementation.
Articles/designs	Limited to articles or designs that are officially published, e.g. official report of a meeting, in a magazine. Clarify your contribution.
Feedback/reviews	Feedback forms of organisations, employers, ... where you worked or performed. These documents must be duly signed by the author.
...	...

2.2.6.3 *Other materials*

Evidence	Requirements
Volunteer work in a non-official organization	Document that shows the participation to a certain activity, as well as a clear description of the tasks at hand. If possible, include reference details of relevant persons.
Activities associated with your free time (e.g. orchestra, band or student job)	Document that proves delivered activity, as well as a clear definition of the tasks. If possible, add the reference details of relevant persons.
Reports / documents from meetings you attended	Meeting reports which clearly show your duties and responsibilities.
...	...

2.2.7 **Evidence in other languages**

Supporting documents may be submitted in Dutch, English, French or German. Documents in other languages must be accompanied by a translation made by a sworn translator in one of the four languages mentioned above.

2.3 Confidentiality

Characteristic for the RPAC procedure and the portfolio is that you provide personal information and documents. Each person with access to your data treats your file confidentially and adheres to the following rules of conduct:

- Your information can only be used within the procedure and will therefore never be communicated to a third party, unless you explicitly request Ghent University Association to do so.
- The portfolio is exclusively part of the procedure and will not be consulted for any other purpose by Ghent University Association.
- Assessors have the right to contact referees at their own discretion. In case they do so, they are obliged to clarify that their consultation is part of the RPAC procedure.

3 Formats portfolio

For the Standard Procedure following documents are always requested:

- Form F-RPA-02: Cover page portfolio
- Form F-RPA-03: CV
- Form F-RPA-05: Competency with Evidence & Assessment
- Form F-RPA-04: Overview of Competencies.

In some cases, also:

- Form F-RPA-06: Reflection File.

4 Formats portfolio

All formats can be found in Word version on www.augent.be/onderwijs or at your university or university college.

