
Methodologies for recognition of learning outcomes from VET to
HE adapted to the Estonian context, including methodologies for
portfolio method blanket RPL
(R7)

LEONARDO DA VINCI Transfer of Innovation Project
“RELATE – PROMOTING THE RECOGNIZABILITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO HIGHER
EDUCATION”
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For more information on the project “RELATE” go to our website
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Aim of the work package and adapted methodology

It is the aim of this work package to adapt the inputs presented and shared in Work Package 3 to local contexts. The output will be implemented methodologies and instruments adapted to:

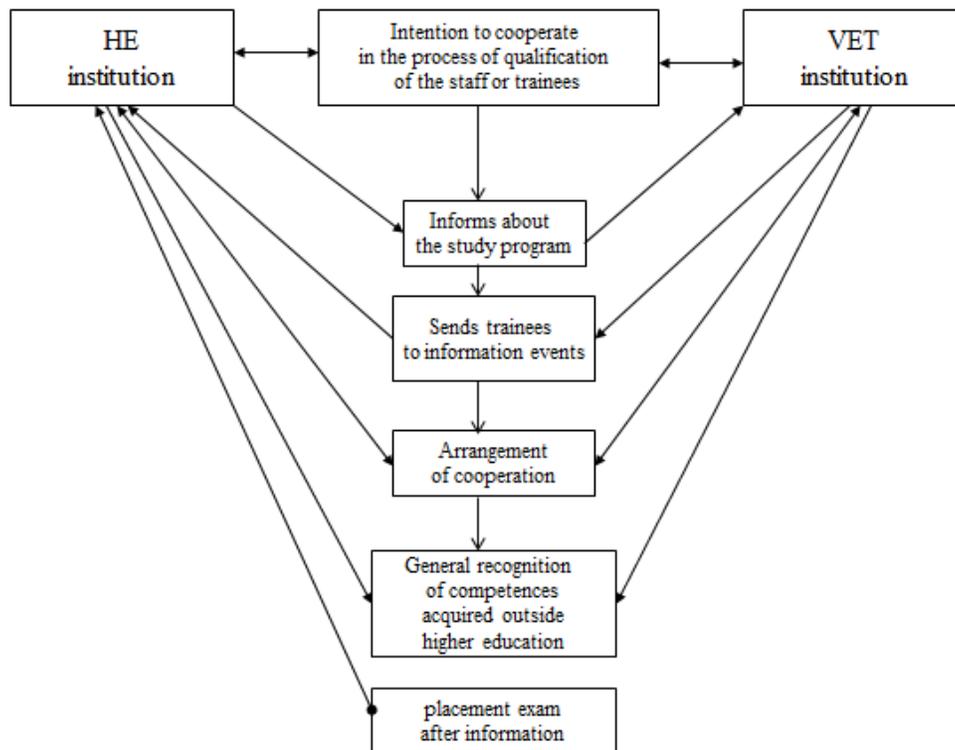
- 1) the Estonian legal framework,
- 2) field of health and social care and
- 3) in particular to the institutional frameworks of the two Estonian project partners.

As a result of WP3 (R5) German partners presented process model for cooperation between VET and HE institution. The process model describes the main stages and role of HE and VET institution (Scheme 1), but does not describe more in detail the different aspects of the methodology (e.g how the arrangement of cooperation could be done or what are the different methods for distributing information), which means that the existing model could be too general and leave too much space for interpretation which can lead to unequal treatment of students.

As blanket RPL would simplify the recognition of previous studies from homogenous group (e.g students from the same VET programme) it was decided to adjust and adapt the methodology based on Estonian legislation, study regulation at Tallinn University and previous experience with VET institutions. Based on the adaptation the process was described more thoroughly so it could be transferred also to other institutions.

The adaptation was done by head of Health Promotion Specialist curriculum, director of Tallinn University Haapsalu College and Tallinn University RPL specialist. During the adaptation there was continuous consultation with lecturers and representatives from Kuressaare Regional Training Centre. The RPL specialist is responsible for administrative part and correspondence to regulations. The head of curriculum has the main responsibility of the content.

Process model for cooperation between VET and HE Institutions



Scheme 1: Process model for cooperation between VET and HE institutions, presented as result of WP by German partners.

Adapted model

The adapted model consists of eight stages (steps) how the cooperation and comparison of curricula between VET and HE institutions could take place. Within each step there has been shortly described the content, prerequisites and also whose responsibility is to conduct the step.

The prerequisite for the model and cooperation is that there are similar curricula in VET and HE level. Which means that graduates of VET school have already studied similar topics that are being taught at HE level.

STEP 1

Content: The comparison of VET and HE curricula and course learning outcomes. Mapping the overlapping courses or parts of courses or topics.

Prerequisite: Learning outcomes must be described taking into consideration the depth and scope of taught knowledge, skills and competences.

Conducted by: Heads of curricula from VET and HE, including lecturers/teachers.

STEP 2

Content: Deciding what can be recognised and on what condition (additional task like an essay, test, interview, self-analysis, case study, cap filling exercises or individual learning, work experience in the field, simulation etc may be necessary as these can prove the competences).

Prerequisite: The comparison of the curricula and course learning outcomes and contents must be done. Lecturers must be aware of the blanket RPL and possible additional assignments.

Conducted by: The comparison of curricula is conducted by HE lecturers who teach a specific course. It is highly recommended not to work individually rather than in a group (e.g committee) to assure quality and same principles for all the students. If possible an external evaluator (e.g

practitioner from the same field) could be included. And if needed a RPL specialist could be invited for administrative questions.

STEP 3

Content: Cooperation agreement between VET and HE.

Prerequisite: It should be agreed besides the recognition that VET and HE will keep each other informed about changes in curricula. Also it would be highly recommended that the development of curricula would be done in cooperation.

Conducted by: Heads of VET and HE institution (formal representatives) and heads of curricula (people know content of curricula).

STEP 4

Content: Information and counseling to VET students about possibilities to continue their studies in HE and use of RPL.

Prerequisite: The agreements must be done between VET and HE. The staff of HE must be aware of opportunities of VET students with wish to use RPL.

Conducted by: VET teachers and counsellors (before the graduation of VET students) and HE staff (e.g info sessions and letters, trainings, distributing info on the website and information fairs).

STEP 5

Content: Admission (during the admission period), discussion on previous knowledge and experience in the field (in general principles during the admission interview).

Prerequisite: Fulfilling the admission requirements based on the national legislation (e.g a candidate must have secondary education before entering higher education on undergraduate level) and requirement that are set by the HE institution.

Conducted by: Admission committee, but also by tutoring teacher or student counsellor.

STEP 6

Content: Counselling and sharing information to students about RPL procedure and technicalities in more detail, e.g necessary documents, application procedure.

Prerequisite: The VET graduates must have been accepted to HE institution.

Conducted by: Student counsellor (or head of study programme or lecturer).

STEP 7

Content: Students hand in application to get LOs recognised and if necessary they pass the additional assignment (see also step 2). If no additional assignment or the assignment is passed, the results will be transferred to students records.

Prerequisite: Students must apply to get previous VET studies recognised (RPL is a possibility not an obligation) as it may be that some of the VET graduates are interested taking the course again and refreshing their knowledge.

Conducted by: Student, assessor (or committee), study assistant.

STEP 8

Content: Student will be given feedback and study plan will be conducted for student about his/her further studies based on what can or cannot be recognised.

Prerequisite: Students RPL application must be evaluated by the assessor(s).

Conducted by: Tutoring teacher or RPL counsellor, student.

Challenges and possibilities of the model

While discussing the model with project partners, staff members of Tallinn University Haapsalu College and Kuressaare Regional Training Center and introducing the model on the RELATE final conference, some challenges and possibilities aroused.

Implementing the model has mainly the challenges of:

- Changes on curricula – in case the curricula changes often it is resourceful to carry out the comparisons every year (or even more often).
- Adult learners – or people who have studies long time ago have curricula which are different so in that case individual assessment is necessary.
- Differences in curricula – in case of different elective or open elective courses again it is necessary to look each applicant individually.

At the same time the model has several positive sides:

- RPL as marketing and encouragement tool – it has been the experience that having the possibility to get something recognised encourages people to carry on their studies. Even though during the studies they might decide not to use RPL and wish to pass the course again.
- Cooperation and trust in curricula development – as the VET and HE will work closely and share the ideas of development, the model encourages cooperation.
- Inclusion of VET representatives for assessment – as the contacts have been acquired it is possibility also to include VET teachers to assessment process and this way again increase the cooperation between two educational institutions.
- Gap filling and other (e.g simulation) methodologies – in case during the VET studies not all of the LOs have been acquired it is possible to use gap filling tasks (e.g simulation method, interview, case study).
- Networking – through the contacts it is possible to network with the teaching staff from the same field on the level of VET and HE.
- Sustainability of cooperation – the formal agreement assures sustainability of cooperation in case the change of people.

List of abbreviations

RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
LO	Learning Outcomes
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
LA	Learning Agreement
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
ECTS	European Credit Transferable System
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Appendix to R7

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Introduction

With the WP7, the adapted methodologies and tools will be tested, if applicable improved and thus the methodologies' quality assured. New findings and experiences will be used to improve the results and to assure their acceptance at institutional level and among stakeholders.

It was decided during the project meeting that due to the comparative and summarizing nature of the documents a separate testing will not be carried out. Rather than all the partners are responsible for their input in the process and an evaluation about the sustainability will be given to all the results by all the partners.

Two testing methods were developed:

- A template for testing a RPL implementation methodology
- A questionnaire to be used with students

Both of the testing methods were implemented:

- Template for testing RPL implementation methodology was used for adapted blanket recognition method. The method was adapted by the Estonian partners from Germany (see R7). Testing was carried out by Estonians and Germans.
- A questionnaire was initiated by the Finnish partners and tested on Finnish students (by carrying out an interview) and Estonian students (responses were collected via e-mail).

A template for testing a RPL implementation methodology

The template consists of 6 criteria which can be taken as a basis for testing and RPL implementation methodology. Each criteria has questions which help to understand the content of the criteria. It is not always possible to apply all the criteria on each methodology, but as with other materials, the template can be adjusted.

Within the project the template was used to test the adapted methodology of blanket accreditation (R7), the testing results have been added as appendix. Based on the testing results improvements were made to the adjusted model.

Criteria 1: Understandability

Is the method understandable to everyone in the organization (applicants, counselors, assessors, board etc.)?
Is the clear how the method can be applied?

[text]

Criteria 2: Applicant

How does the method take into account the needs and possibilities of an applicant?
When using this method, is the timeframe reasonable for applicant?
Does the applicant get feedback when using the method?
What are the main questions/challenges that applicant face when using the method?

[text]

Criteria 3: Counseling

How is the information and counseling about the use of method made available?
What is the role of counselors with using this method?
How can the method support counseling?

[text]

Criteria 4: Validation/assessment

How will the student be assessed (based on what criteria) according to the method?
What sort of other proof materials does the student need?
Who will assess based on this method, how is it assured that the assessor is objective?

[text]

Criteria 5: Regulations

Is the use of method mentioned at the regulations?

[text]

Criteria 6: Quality assurance

How does the method support the quality of RPL process?
How could the method be improved?

[text]

A questionnaire for students

The questionnaire involves questions about regulations, support, assessment, future plans etc. Based on the feedback it is possible for the VET or HE staff members to make improvements in their regulations or implementation process.

The questionnaire was applied on Estonian and Finnish students and results have been added as appendix.

Questions:

1. How do you describe the recognition process from the point of view of a student?
2. Have you applied for prior learning recognition?
3. How do you understand what does the prior learning recognition mean?
4. Where did you get information about the recognition process?
5. From whom did you get help during the recognition process?
6. How much time did you spend in the recognition process?
7. Describe how you applied for the recognition e.g. by using portfolio, using e-learning documents, having a test, showing knowledge and skills etc.
8. What things were arranged well in the recognition process?
9. What things need to be developed to help the students better during the recognition process?
10. What else would you like to say about the prior learning recognition process?
11. How has using RPL influenced your studies? (e.g shorter time, reduce the amount of courses etc)
12. What have you lost or gained when using RPL? (the idea is to see if they understand the wider goal of RPL and realize also what they might have lost)

List of abbreviations

RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
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Appendix 1 – evaluation of adapted model (R7) based on the template

Criteria 1: Understandability

1.1 Is the method understandable to everyone in the organization (applicants, counselors, assessors, board etc.)?

1.2 Is it clear how the method can be applied?

EE: The method has described step by step how the comparison can be made. It also gives the prerequisites and information about the responsibility. Though in some steps the method is quite general and could be maybe more useful to know about methods how the content could be compared (if there is some good methodology or practice).

DE: The model is understandable, but could be even more detailed. We think that applicants and Board/counselors are complete different target groups for this process-model. So it should be different for at least board and applicants. How is responsible for the hole process, or does responsibility change after Step 3. How works academic and administrative staff together? Necessary or useful documents should be included in the process model. Model is not meant for the applicants. Appendixes could be added.

Criteria 2: Applicant

2.1 How does the method take into account the needs and possibilities of an applicant?

2.2 When using this method, is the timeframe reasonable for applicant?

2.3 Does the applicant get feedback when using the method?

2.4 What are the main questions/challenges that applicant face when using the method?

EE: The method takes very well into account the needs and possibilities of a student. The counseling has been provided, also it is mentioned that RPL is a possibility

not an obligation. No timeframe is set for it. More should be thought about giving feedback to students, though it is said that an additional task could be given. Students could have procedural challenges and questions – what documents need to be presented and to whom.

DE: It seems to be too detailed until step 4 for the applicants. For applicants, it should be more practical: including addresses, forms, to be used, material, which had to bring in. A timeframe should be included. May be an electronic system, which accompanies through the process. Feedback? Is included in step 4 and 6, should be more clearly Main question: Is there a guaranty, that my VET-diploma will be recognized? – The Concept should include a list of all VET-diplomas, which are ready for blanked recognition.

Criteria 3: Counseling

3.1 How is the information and counseling about the use of method made available?

3.2 What is the role of counselors with using this method?

3.3 How can the method support counseling?

EE: Individual counseling and information is made available and is mentioned within the method. The method supports counseling through its detailness – what steps needs to be taken. Bridge to individual recognition.

DE: Should include a bridge to portfolio-method: if no blanked-recognition is possible, a **portfolio-process should start**.

Criteria 4: Validation/assessment

4.1 How will the student be assessed (based on what criteria) according to the method?

4.2 What sort of other proof materials does the student need?

4.3 Who will assess based on this method, how is it assured that the assessor is objective?

EE: There is not an individual assessment, rather than assessment of programmes so basically the student only has to show that he/she has the experience. It is said who is the assessor and to assure quality it is recommended that assessment needs to be done by several people, not a single individual.

DE: The process includes the formal criteria, but there is no space for reflection of the interest or capability in higher education

Criteria 5: Regulations

5.1 Is the use of method mentioned at the regulations?

EE: It is said that there is possibility for comparison of programmes. Also that different methods can be used.

Criteria 6: Quality assurance

6.1 How does the method support the quality of RPL process?

6.2 How could the method be improved?

6.3 Who is responsible for the quality of the method in whole?

EE: The method describes roles and tasks of different parties. The method could be even more detailed about specific curricula, but this could be also added in each specific case. Who is responsible for the whole process. Evaluation of the process and studies as a whole.

DE: A evaluation of the process should be included at least after the first students finished the. i.e. number of successful applicants.

Appendix 2 – results of interview with Finnish students

1. How do you describe the recognition process from the point of view of a student?

At the beginning the process sounded difficult and unconcern, but later on it was not too difficult. Some of the students thought that the most demanding was to find instructions and forms that were found from SUAS Wilma student interface. Some of the students were not used to filling forms and did not trust themselves. However, some of the students thought, that in internet the recognition application was quite easy to fill in and it did not take very much time. When you understood, that by looking at a course by course, you could find what kind of competence you already had.

The first RPL process was difficult because it was hard to find the right forms and because of not having enough skills to describe as thorough as needed own know-how. Later on you learned to describe and also learned the actual process. The self-esteem and ability to reflect has deepened during the studies and helped in the future the description and the whole process as well.

There was also a possibility to apply for recognition with the forms, if the recognition was a part of a study unit or a course. In those cases students took all the needed papers to their tutoring teacher e.g. work certificates etc. That was very easy and comfortable for the student, because the tutoring teacher could answer the questions at the same time and further support the student in the process.

“It was discussions with tutoring teacher about what studies from the previous bachelor level degree were equivalent to nursing studies and also how would previous long work experience in different kind of health care settings be included in nursing.”

“I experienced that there is someone (teacher) who believes and trusts that I have the competences; so that I need not to study the same issues for many times; that would have been frustrating.”

2. Have you applied for prior learning recognition?

All the participated students had applied for RPL. The students applied for the recognition because it was not sensible to study again the issues they already knew and had the skills. When students had realized that they knew all the practical and theoretical areas needed in the particular course, they applied for recognition.

The credit transfer was easy from work practice, work experience or other competences as a part of the earlier degree programmes as well as the whole of a study unit/course.

Theoretical studies and languages were applied for recognition based on prior studies. The most common was to apply for recognition of the different kind of practice periods. The practice periods could have been almost same and sometimes even in same placements in VET as could be in HE education. That could have been waste of time to do it again.

The gained know-how was in connection with the place where they had been practicing and working during and after the studies. Some placements had been very good to become competent while the others were not.

The students either had applied for recognition by the e-learning programme or face to face discussion with a tutoring teacher. The SUAS Wilma student interface of the student administration system had usable necessary electronic tools for initiating the process of recognition of prior learning. The tools enabled passing the information of applications between the student and the tutoring teacher and thus made it comfortable. In Wilma it was rather easy to proceed and think about the RPL.

3. How do you understand what does the prior learning recognition mean?

Students understood that RPL means evaluation of their personal competence which they are able to show and prove. That process could give them recognition and further time to their personal issues or helps them take more time to studies they really needed to become competent.

Students also realized that sometimes the prior education was not enough to gain the RPL. The real life work experience and practice was also needed to be able to realize if there is the needed know-how or not.

Students mentioned that they had to start the RPL from course requirements by thinking about if they were able to manage them according to the nurse profession. It was challenging to find correspondence between courses and your previous working experience because the things you learned could be different in different work settings.

4. Where did you get information about the recognition process?
5. From whom did you get help during the recognition process?

Tutoring teachers ensured that the students knew the curriculum of their study programme by having a special tutoring lecture at least once a year. The tutoring teachers advised the RPL process by using both individual and group counselling. Counselling was discussion concerning the personal study plan encompassing every student. Later, if the students needed, they could have individual discussions.

At the beginning of the studies the students had to do a mapping of their studies and competencies. There were questions in the initial mapping through which the students reflected on their prior competencies.

Very often the helper in the RPL process was also the teacher who was a leader of the particular study unit or course. That teacher was the expert to decide what the student should know, and thus cable very quickly to say whether it was worth to apply for recognition or not.

Very useful was also the knowledge from other students who had applied for RPL, from them students got good tips. Other staff members as well were helpful. Also the school counsellor, administration staff and the IT-teacher helped a lot.

The students found the suitable information in the University internet and student counselling net system. Especially the orientation course for studies and professional development was a starting point for the RPL. Still, at the beginning of the studies there where too much knowledge to handle and process at the same time. Some students thought that there were not clear instructions from the school and teachers had different ways to give advices – mixed instructions.

6. How much time did you spend in the recognition process?

The time spent into the RPL process depended on how well the student had realized what does competence really mean and the RPL process. Sometimes it was difficult to understand how the fact that how the learning has been acquired influenced to the recognition method. Sometimes they needed to fill in many forms, sometimes just discussed with a teacher and sometimes gathered a huge pile of documents and wrote then the description. Still, it was finally experienced reasonable work.

The whole process could last months or couple days. It was quick to do, if the student had to describe and document competence and search and print the documents. It took about several days to find the documents, check what was needed in the RPL and do the application. Also justifying the application took some time. Moreover, sorting out everything took most of the time, because they needed to consider if it's possible to have RPL, do they even start the process, sort everything out etc.

In internet the recognition application was quite easy to fill in and it did not take very much time.

It was mentioned that one of most challenging efforts in the RPL process was to describe in English the name of the prior learned course or the work experience. Other challenge was that different teachers demanded descriptions on different accuracy level.

7. Describe how you applied for the recognition e.g. by using portfolio, using e-learning documents, having a test, showing knowledge and skills etc.

Students described, that before applying for the recognition, they had to go through the study unit/course, ponder thoroughly the aims of them and compare their own competence in connection with the curriculum content. Thereafter they had to prove and justify their personal competence. That meant that students had to be very honest to themselves and others. They had to be proud and have enough self-esteem to describe their know-how, but also admit, if there was not enough prior knowledge.

It was not enough to describe your life etc. experiences, but you had to assess critically (reflect) own knowledge and skills and personal potential to start of the RPL process. When you did the description well, the discussion regarding the personal competence was good. The student received feedback from the tutoring teacher both about the description and the progress of the professional development and ability on setting goals. That helped to fulfil the documents etc.

The objectives of the curriculum were difficult to understand and that is why the students had to ask the evaluation criteria of different practice periods from the course teachers. That took sometimes a lot of time.

Some students had verified their competences in-depth by describing patient case-studies about their experiences, reflected on what kind of decisions with justifications they had made at work

and described what kind of methods used at work. The students self-assessment on their own learning and development of competencies and professionalism served as the basis for the reflection.

Scanning all documents was time consuming and thus some students started to construct their own portfolio where to choose the right documents. Students also had to pass the work or study certificates to the tutoring teacher.

“I described and documented what kind of competences I have, had the school and work certificates, had discussions with tutoring teacher and e-mails with the responsible teacher of the course and other teachers. Sometimes you needed to have contact and negotiations with 5-6 persons. I also compared things with fellow students and noticed that we had received RPL on different bases.”

“The RPL process was quite arduous, but it was not a bad thing. The teacher probably hoped, that by the RPL I will understand what are the matters that I should focus on in my shortened practice. It helped me as well to set up my objectives for the practice period.”

8. What things were arranged well in the recognition process?

The students felt that in SUAS it was rather easy or reasonable to gain for RPL from a prior working experience. The students had heard by discussing with other students from other Universities that it could be more difficult in some other institutions.

The students experienced very nice to find out that learning acquired before or during the degree studies could be credited as a part of the degree studies through substitution, inclusion or RPL demonstration. It was reasonable to be able to concentrate in to other issues than doing again the same.

The students were pleased to get advice and support about what courses they could apply RPL. It heightened students´ self-esteem and gradually helped them to describe their competence. It was good that they could document own competence compared to evaluation criteria in an informal way.

Some of the teachers guided perfectly and were helpful, some of them not. Also the answering to the students questions varied a lot; some of the teachers read and answered the e-mails quickly,

some of them very slowly or almost never. If the process moved ahead smoothly and quickly, it was very motivating.

Some teachers gave the students possibilities to show their prior knowledge and skills at the beginning of skill-labs and thus let the student go to other activities meanwhile the others were practicing. (Differentiation of the studies based on the student needs).

9. What things need to be developed to help the students better during the recognition process?

The RPL process should not be too complicated and thus students suggested shared language for teachers and students. The distance between teachers and students should be decreased in the RPL process. The process should be developed further and think about if there could be more time to learn well the most important issues of the process.

It took some time to understand that the personal study and career plan (HOPS) is a magnificent tool for planning studies. Through the personal study plan the curriculum could become a dynamic plan of studies.

Coming from VET to HE was partially, at the beginning of the studies, mentioned as a waste of time, because at the beginning there were similar courses than had already taught/learned in the VET education.

Students mentioned that there was a need for

- more help with the documents and the process, maybe a standardized model which could gone through with a teacher during tutoring lessons
- more clear instructions into SUAS wilma, exact instructions, what should be written and on which section of the form
- more help from the tutoring teacher or the course teachers in planning the speeding of studies
- planning better shortening study time if student has many RPL; from the economic viewpoint students will graduate faster there should be more opportunities to do the studies faster
- more responsibility from the teachers when it is worth to apply for the RPL the applications could then be better written and the process itself goes on smoothly (now time consuming both to the teacher and the student)
- more knowledge about the + and - of the RPL

- there should be different options (verbal, documentation, demonstration) for applying RPL, also partially; simulation, skills demonstration, possibility to show competence at the beginning of the placement period and thus shorten the placement time
- ability to practice skills in skill labs and more possibilities to try to show if the student does not pass the test she/he will be more motivated in participating the course
- the first half year of HE studies should be recognized on based on the VET education ; the students can easily feel humiliated, if one is already a practical nurse and has long work experience there should be some RPL compared with those students, who come from high school without any experience
- add students own activity and responsibility of the process
- more possibilities to have web-based studies
- more clarifying about how the RPL affects on student financial aids
- it's also unclear to whom you should send the application and to whom it goes in different phases of the process; you should always get feedback during the process
- there could be only one person who were responsible for RPL; he/she should be able to answer questions, give advice and guide the RPL process; this would enable the process to be equal to all the students
- should have an opportunity to tell your competences verbally to the teacher; at the same time you would be able to ask questions and to justify things
- there should be minimum requirements for each degree: what is the number of courses (ECTS) that should be completed during the programme and what is the number of courses that can be recognized based on the previous studies (RPL)

10. What else would you like to say about the prior learning recognition process?

Students' thought that there are some studies which should not be recognized because they are so important to study in HE to gain the competence. They also pondered that studies in VET differed a lot in University and therefore teachers should be careful to whom they give RPL or other alleviations. Students had realized that quite often the young ones think at the beginning, that they have enough knowledge, but later on they may understand, that they do not have it. That makes RPL rather complicated issue and need more tutors help.

Students pondered that the teachers should have the clear, uniform requirements and shared, equal instructions for justifications of RPL; the RPL should not be based on coincidence. Also all the RPL applications related to a certain course should be dealt at the same time in order to enable

comparing the applications and confirming the equality of decisions – it is important to inform clearly the timetable to the students.

Students also pondered if there is a possibility for laying or forging the documents etc. to make impression about prior competence which does not really exist.

” I think that the teachers would not always see and appreciate the competences that the students have achieved during their long work experience. I have heard that “surface appeal” (good-looks factor) is crucial”

11. How has using RPL influenced your studies? (e.g. shorter time, reduce the amount of courses etc.)

13. What have you lost or gained when using RPL? (the idea is to see if they understand the wider goal of RPL and realise also what they might have lost)

Anybody had not lost almost anything when using RPL. Only mentioned issue was that those having RPL did see so many placements during their studies. Mainly the RPL was experienced wonderful possibility. Still some of the students mentioned that RPL did not always shorten the study time, which would be very good. There had been plenty of advantages of the RPL because of the possibility to do some other tasks

- possibility to work and earn money
- possibility to take time with family and kids
- possibility to shorten studies by taking some extra courses or by skipping into another group/class
- possibility to concentrate into the thesis or into personally challenging study areas
- possibility to deepen personal competence in real work, heighten awareness by working, reflection during own work due to the reflection process at school
- elevated study motivation
- helped and fostered ability to leave behind the old ways of working and acquire the nurse’s point of view
- give time to have a decent maternity leave

“I will graduate sooner”

“It has enabled my studying concretely, without RPL I would not have coped – now there are less courses to do”

“It is very embarrassing if then during the practice period or at work you are not able to perform the issue; and if you apply too much RPL it is not sure if you then master everything needed”

“I think that maybe I have lost something – I do not see so many work places, however, I think it is not a big loss, the benefit is bigger”

“I have not applied RLP at all for theory courses, because I feel that I need them all”

Appendix 3 – results of questionnaire with Estonian students

1. How do you describe the recognition process from the point of view of a student?

When getting to know your curriculum it is possible to analyze, which previous experience can be recognized and what could be transferred. Once you start your studies you can make an application and afterwards the evaluation committee and specialists will take a look and see what could be transferred. The process means to fill out the necessary documents.

2. How do you understand what does the prior learning recognition mean?

It means that a person do not have to learn the same thing again. E.g a person can use their knowledge and skills what they have previously gained and use them in their current studies and work. Though it is good that there is still the possibility to learn these things again (if one should want to do that).

3. Where did you get information about the recognition process?

The knowledge came already quite long time ago. From the webpage.

4. From whom did you get help during the recognition process?

From our college RPL specialist who introduced RPL and also from the main building specialist who introduced the possibilities during one course. Nobody.

5. What documents did you have to present

For Tallinn University courses I didn't need additional documents. For other schools the transcript for records and for training and work experience the self-analysis needed to be added as well.

6. How much time did you spent in the recognition process?

Few days up to a month.

7. Was the RPL understandable and smooth? What things need to be developed to help the students better during the recognition process?

In case any questions it was possible to ask and get quick feedback and instructions. Transferring work experience seems unclear and could be made more understandable (e.g. how is the evaluation done, what could be recognized at all). Also to make the system easier at the moment it seems too complicated. The process was smooth and no developments are needed.

8. How has RPL influenced your studies (are the studies for example shorter?)

My employer allows me to study once I can transfer something (I do not have to take all the courses). Also I can now take more practical courses and those that are really connected to why I came to study. I could transfer my theoretical courses and now concentrate on developing practical skills. For some of the student it did not have any influence.

9. Did you win or lose something when using RPL?

I rather won, especially if it is not the first HE. Also RPL allows to focus more on the practical courses. Some students say they didn't win or lose anything.