

HEC Montréal Policy on the Recognition of Acquired Competencies

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1. PREAMBLE

HEC Montréal is fully engaged in its community and committed to a philosophy of lifelong learning and a pedagogical approach whereby learning is a continuous process. By providing access to recognition of acquired competencies (RAC), HEC Montréal confirms its commitment to:

- Foster access to education, the pursuit of education, and graduation
- Foster equity, diversity and inclusion
- Appropriately address students' needs throughout their academic career
- Assess students' acquired competencies, both academic and experiential, to recognize them fairly in relation to HEC Montréal's academic programs
- Support students throughout the RAC process.

2. PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTALS OF THE RECOGNITION OF ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES PROCESS

2.1 Recognition of acquired competencies (RAC) is a process for people who have built significant competency through education and/or experience. It allows for acquired competencies to be officially recognized in lieu of one or more courses in an academic program at HEC Montréal.

2.2 A process to recognize prior learning is based on the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* issued by the principles *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec*¹, which states that individuals:

- have the right to the formal recognition of learning and competencies insofar as they are able to provide proof that they possess them
- do not have to redo in a formal educational setting any learning they have already acquired in other contexts or in other ways
- should not be obliged to seek recognition again for competencies or prior learning that has been properly evaluated and certified by an official system.

2.3 The context in which competencies were acquired is used to distinguish between academic versus experiential learning. Academic learning is acquired through credits earned in recognized educational institutions, whereas experiential learning comes from life experience, work experience, or non-credited training.

¹ Gouvernement du Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training. Learning Throughout Life*, Quebec, 2002, p. 23-24.

- 2.4 An RAC process is an individualized, structured process that is based on principles to ensure process quality and reliable results.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE HEC MONTRÉAL POLICY ON THE RECOGNITION ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES

- 3.1 In adopting this policy, HEC Montréal aims to align its RAC practices for all targeted programs. The purpose of the policy is to ensure rigour, transparency, and reliability in the process, as well as consistency, equity, and equivalence in its evaluation practices.
- 3.2 Specifically, the purpose of the Policy is to:
- Define a practical framework specific to HEC Montréal for RAC of an academic or experiential nature
 - Institute best practices to guide the development and implementation of mechanisms for RAC of an academic or experiential nature
 - Guide the process of RAC of an academic or experiential nature within a defined institutional structure
 - Define the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the RAC process
 - Support skills development, promote prior learning, and encourage innovative lifelong learning.

4. SCOPE

- 4.1 This policy pertains to students admitted to an HEC Montréal program who wish to avail themselves of an RAC service for their studies.
- 4.2 It is intended for all persons involved in the implementation or support of RAC practices at HEC Montréal.
- 4.3 Certain programs, such as those linked to a professional association, may have constraints or particular conditions, and so may add or reject restrictions when applying the Policy on the Recognition of Acquired Competencies.
- 4.4 Specific limitations also apply for certain programs:
- BBA, MSc, and PhD: no RAC of an experiential nature
 - MBA: no RAC of an academic or experiential nature

5. LIMITS

Recognition of acquired competencies of an academic nature can only be granted for courses which have already been successfully completed and credited in a university, and in a program deemed to be at least equivalent. Students may only make such a request for activities that took place within ten years prior to submitting the RAC request for the program in which they are enrolled. In the case of an equivalency or an exemption, a minimum grade of C or equivalent is required at the undergraduate level and a minimum grade of B or equivalent is required at the graduate levels.

HEC Montréal does not recognize acquired competencies of an academic nature for courses offered by professional associations. However, courses combined with significant work experience can be assessed for recognition of competencies of an experiential nature.

5.1 Undergraduate level

5.1.1 The maximum number of credits a student can receive for an equivalency or an exemption is 50% of program credits.

5.2 Graduate level

5.2.1 The maximum number of credits a student can receive for an equivalency, exemption, or transfer:

5.2.2 If courses have gone or will go toward obtaining a degree or a diploma, the limit is **20% of the course credits** in an HEC Montréal graduate program.

5.2.3 If courses have not gone and will not go toward obtaining a degree or a diploma, the limit is **50% of the course credits** in an HEC Montréal graduate program.

5.2.4 With the approval of the Academic Council, particular provisions may apply to cases of dual degrees. HEC Montréal does not grant equivalencies for synthesis activities.

5.3 PhD level

5.3.1 The maximum number of credits a student can receive for an equivalency is **6 course credits** in an HEC Montréal PhD program.

5.3.2 Transfer credits cannot be granted.

5.3.3 HEC Montréal does not grant equivalencies for synthesis activities.

6. STEPS OF THE RECOGNITION OF ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES PROCESS

6.1 Competencies of an academic nature

The steps of the process to recognize acquired competencies of an academic nature are as follows:

6.1.1 Submitting a request

- 6.1.1.1. For competencies of an academic nature, students must submit a request for recognition of acquired competencies of an academic nature using the form provided. They must submit their request along with the required proof of education documents (transcripts, syllabus, official translations, etc.).

6.1.2 Estimate request

- 6.1.2.1. This step involves a rigorous assessment of the student's acquired competencies of an academic nature based on the request and support documents submitted.
- 6.1.2.2. The request is assessed on the basis of previous decisions made on course equivalencies at HEC Montréal. If there is no course equivalency at the university, an expert at HEC Montréal will handle the assessment.

6.1.3 Decision

- 6.1.3.1. During this step, the results of the student's RAC request for each course are reported.
- If the decision is positive, the RAC will lead to an equivalency or dispensation, depending on the nature of the request.
 - If the decision is negative, the student cannot receive an equivalency or dispensation, depending on the nature of the request.

6.1.4 Records

- 6.1.4.1. Decisions on acquired competencies of an academic nature will be kept in the Registrar's Office records.

6.2 Competencies of an experiential nature

For **competencies of an experiential nature**, students must submit a request for recognition of acquired competencies of an experiential nature. Using the form provided, they must submit their request along with the required documents supporting the request. The steps of the process to recognize acquired competencies of an experiential nature are as follows:

6.2.1 Reception and information on the process

- 6.2.1.1. The purpose of this first step is to facilitate access to the RAC process and to the information needed to make a request. Students can obtain information from the RAC advisor on the process and requirements for RAC of an experiential nature.
- 6.2.1.2. During this step, students who decide to make an RAC request can learn about the resources available to guide them through the process.

6.2.2 Submitting the request and eligibility phase

6.2.2.1. The purpose of this step is to establish the eligibility of the request. Once the request and support documents have been examined, a notice of eligibility or lack thereof will be sent to the applicant.

6.2.2.2. If the request is deemed eligible, the candidate can continue the process and skip to step 6.2.3.

6.2.3 Preparation and demonstration of acquired competencies

6.2.3.1. For RAC of an experiential nature, the step of preparing and demonstrating acquired competencies requires students to consider their acquired competencies and prior learning to identify elements that could demonstrate their competencies that meet the requirements of one or more courses in their academic program. During this step, students submit proof documents to support their request.

6.2.4 Evaluation of the request

6.2.4.1. This step involves a rigorous assessment of the student's acquired competencies based on the request and support documents submitted. The request will be evaluated and handled by an expert at HEC Montréal using an instrument adapted for RAC of an experiential nature so that the analysis is both thorough and objective.

6.2.4.2. Based on the request, the expert will make a decision as to the relevance of the demonstrated competencies and decide whether to grant or deny recognition for the course indicated in the request.

6.2.4.3. The expert may deem it necessary to verify whether certain competencies were acquired. In such a case, the expert may require additional measures, such as a structured interview, assessment test, additional task, additional support documents, or any other measure that will enable them to verify the competencies or whether they truly align with the expected competencies or objectives for the course indicated in the request.

6.2.5 Decision on the RAC request

6.2.5.1. During this step, the results of the student's RAC request for each course are reported.

- If the decision is positive, the RAC will lead to an exemption.
- If the decision is negative, the student will not receive the requested exemption.

6.2.5.2. The student will receive a copy of the decision.

6.2.6 Decisions recorded

6.2.6.1. The Registrar's Office keeps a record of RAC decisions. Experts may have access to them when making decisions in the future.

7. CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURE FOR EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO REVIEW

- 7.1 If an RAC request is denied, the student can launch a procedure to review the decision by communicating with the Registrar's Office.
- 7.2 During this process, the file is reviewed by a committee comprising a representative from the Academic Programs Office, an expert who did not participate in evaluating the request, and a designated member of the Registrar's Office. The purpose of the review process is to verify whether the principles for evaluating the request were adhered to and whether the expert's evaluation was thorough and fair.
- 7.3 The requesting student may be asked to provide additional documents or proof to assist in the analysis. Depending on the situation, the committee may also avail itself of any other mechanism to verify the student's acquired competencies.
- 7.4 The committee will announce a verdict as to whether it will uphold or amend the decision; this will be considered final and cannot be appealed. The committee must explain its decision, which will be sent to the student in writing within 30 days of the review request.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Students in the RAC process

- 8.1.1 Students who wish to begin an RAC process must be aware of the various conditions of the process. Since the process is about them, they are responsible for preparing the request in compliance with the requirements and rules in effect, and for providing the support documents needed to evaluate their request.
- 8.1.2 Students in the RAC process may be asked to cooperate with the expert evaluating their request by undergoing an interview, tests, or any other measure deemed relevant to verify their competencies.

8.2 Faculty

- 8.2.1 Faculty are asked to act as experts in the RAC process due to their recognized expertise in a discipline or professional field related to an academic program at HEC Montréal. Their roles and responsibilities can vary depending on their mandate. As experts, they may be a lead evaluator for a request or be asked to contribute to developing RAC tools.
- 8.2.2 The role of lead evaluator is to evaluate RAC requests and issue a decision on the recognition of one or more courses. To do this, the expert verifies that the competencies the student has presented are consistent with the learning objectives of the course indicated in the request. Once the evaluation has been completed, the lead evaluator makes a recommendation to the

Registrar's Office as to whether to approve or deny RAC for the course indicated on the request.

8.2.3 When a request involves several presumed competencies, the lead evaluator may propose an additional step to validate the student's competencies in relation to the requirements or identified courses.

8.2.4 As a contributor to the development of RAC tools, an expert may be asked to help develop evaluation tools or any other RAC mechanism.

8.3 Registrar's Office

8.3.1 The Registrar's Office applies the Policy on the Recognition of Acquired Competencies in keeping with the orientations of HEC Montréal. The Registrar's Office oversees the application of principles to ensure process quality and reliable results. Process quality management helps maintain best RAC practices.

8.3.2 In terms of organization, the Registrar's Office works jointly with the Academic Programs Office to develop and implement processes and various RAC mechanisms that are specific to HEC Montréal but that also account for the particularities of the academic programs. The Registrar's Office makes sure that specialized documents are in compliance and updated; it cooperates to organize activities to train those involved.

8.3.3 The Registrar's Office assists in HEC Montréal's promotion and recruitment activities, and in the promotion of RAC services to interested organizations or individuals.

8.3.4 The role of the Registrar's Office is to assist students who wish to make an RAC request and to facilitate communication between various stakeholders.

8.3.5 Students submit an RAC request to a member of the Registrar's Office. This person makes sure the documents are in order and keeps official documents in the student's file. For requests for RAC of an academic nature, this person must also check if there is precedent and, if so, apply that decision to the request.

8.3.6 The Registrar's Office must inform the student in writing of the decision made on their request and record it in their file.

8.4 Academic Programs Office

8.4.1 The Academic Programs Office works jointly with the Registrar's Office to inform faculty about RAC and encourage them to participate in creating the pedagogical instruments needed to provide the RAC the university offers.

8.4.2 The Academic Programs Office, with faculty support, is responsible for providing the information needed to develop RAC conditions and for ensuring that RAC requests for the specified courses are treated equitably and in keeping with the standards in effect.

APPENDIX 1 - DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

“Recognition of acquired competencies (RAC)”: A process by which a student enrolled in a program can obtain official recognition of their acquired competencies of an academic or experiential nature. The university is thereby able to verify the alignment of such competencies with one or more courses in an academic program.

“Competencies of an academic nature”: Prior learning obtained from structured training through studies at higher learning institutions that are part of an accredited educational system. The recognition of competencies of an academic nature is what allows for course equivalencies.

“Competencies of an experiential nature”: Prior learning obtained in a non-academic setting. Such competencies typically come from the person’s professional and personal background (professional experience, training activities, community activities, self-study, etc.). The recognition of competencies of an experiential nature is what allows for course exemptions.

“Competency”: A complex ability to perform a task whereby a person draws upon and effectively combines a variety of internal and external resources within a set of situations. (Tardif, 2006)².

“Learning objective of a course”: The results expected from students. Reaching objectives means that the competencies targeted in the course have been acquired or developed.

² Tardif, J. (2006). *L'évaluation des compétences - Documenter le parcours de développement*. Chenelière Éducation.

APPENDIX 2 – TYPES OF RAC

Recognition of acquired competencies may take the form of an equivalency, an exemption, a transfer, or a dispensation.

Equivalency

An equivalency is granted when one or more educational activities completed by a student at another university or in another program at HEC Montréal meet the requirements of a course or a block of courses in the student's program. A course recognized by equivalence appears on the transcripts with the comment "EQ". Credits for a course recognized by equivalence count as part of the total credits required to complete the program. However, the grade for this course does not appear on the transcripts and does not contribute to the student's grade point average.

Exemption

An exemption is granted when the sum of the student's prior professional experience or training meets the requirements of a course or a block of courses in the student's program. A course recognized by an exemption appears on the transcripts with the comment "EX". Credits for a course recognized by exemption count as part of the total credits required to complete the program. However, the grade for this course does not appear on the transcripts and does not contribute to the student's grade point average.

Transfer

A transfer is granted when the grade for a course previously completed at HEC Montréal is recorded on the student's transcripts for a given program. The credits for the transferred course count towards the total credits required to complete the program. The grade for each transferred course is shown on the transcripts and counts towards the student's grade point average.

Dispensation

A dispensation is granted when a student is authorized to replace a course in their program of study with another course offered at HEC Montréal or at another university. The course for which a dispensation is granted appears on the transcripts with the comment "DI". The credits for the dispensed course do not count towards the total credits required to complete the program. The credits for the substitution course count as part of the total credits required to complete the program. The grade for the substitution course appears on the student's transcripts. A letter grade contributes to the grade point average.