

Pursuant to Articles 10 and 127, Section 1, of the Higher Education Act (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska”, nos. 73/2010, 104/2011, 84/2012, 108/2013, 44/2015, 90/2016, 5/2017 – Decision of the Constitutional Court, and 31/2018), and Articles 171 and 172, Section 3, of the Statute of the University of Banja Luka, the Senate of the University of Banja Luka adopted, in its 34th session held on 28 February 2019,

R U L E B O O K

ON THE RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BANJA LUKA AND ON THE PROCESS OF EQUALIZATION OF ACADEMIC DEGREES PREVIOUSLY AWARDED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF BANJA LUKA

PART I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. (Subject)

- (1) This Rulebook establishes the process and criteria for recognizing foreign educational qualifications for the purpose of continuing education at the University of Banja Luka (hereinafter: University).
- (2) This Rulebook establishes more closely the process and criteria for equalizing the degrees awarded by the University according to the rules and regulations previously in effect with new degrees as conferred in accordance with the Higher Education Act, Statute and other general acts of the University.
- (3) The process and criteria as specified in this Rulebook stipulating the recognition of foreign educational qualifications apply equally to the recognition of educational qualifications awarded in the home country for formal, non-formal and other forms of education and learning.

Article 2. (Glossary of terms)

- (1) The terms used in this Rulebook mean as follows:

Academic recognition of a foreign educational qualification is the official acknowledgment of the level of education received and knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by a person submitting an application to extend their education, which may include the recognition of non-formal education as well as other forms of education and learning.

Biographic information document is an accurate description or reconstruction of one’s academic achievement based on: detailed information provided by the applicant about the content, scope and level of education; documents and additional evidence as submitted by the applicant (diplomas/degrees, work experience certificates and other evidence that can help verify the information provided by the applicant).

Higher education degree is a public document confirming one has completed a higher education degree program.

Diploma supplement is a public document that makes a constituent part of a higher education degree. It contains a description of the nature, level, relatedness of content and status of the degree program attended and successfully completed by its holder.

Equalization is a process whereby a degree awarded by the University according to terms and conditions not grounded on the framework and guidelines of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (hereinafter: ECTS) are equalized with new degrees, as awarded in accordance with the ECTS framework and guidelines.

Learning outcomes are statements that specify what a student is expected to know, understand and/or is capable of demonstrating after a period of study. They describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes students acquire during their studies.

Person with incomplete documentation or no documentation means a refugee, displaced person, asylum seeker or person enjoying subsidiary protection, or any other person unable to provide documents that prove they have obtained the qualification(s) they claim to hold, but who has submitted evidence from an authorized institution in confirmation of the status claimed, in accordance with applicable rules and regulations.

Person enjoying subsidiary protection is a person who has not been granted the status of asylum seeker, but who enjoys certain rights in the territory of the receiving country, in compliance with applicable international agreements and the legislation of the receiving country.

Non-formal education is education gained outside a formal education system, yet administered in the framework of a flexibly structured learning context oriented toward professional training and other social activities, as well as personal development. Non-formal education does not result in a formal educational qualification, but it may finish with a formalized assessment of the learning outcomes, i.e. of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired, with a corresponding qualification awarded in confirmation thereof.

Educational qualification is a diploma or an equivalent document issued by authorities, educational institutions, professional training and development centers and other authorized institutions, confirming that the document holder has successfully completed, fully or in part, a specific educational program, and acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies, i.e., a specific educational qualification, in accordance with the legislation of the country in which it was issued.

Recognition of an educational qualification is a process followed to ascertain and confirm the value of a foreign educational qualification and give its holder the right to continue their education, i.e., enroll in a higher education program administered by the University.

Foreign higher education qualification is any public document issued by a foreign institution of higher education, with the exception of those awarded in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia prior to 6 April 1992 and the public qualifications and documents as specified in the Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Educational Qualifications and Resolution of Status Issues of Pupils and Students ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska", no. 79/05), awarded by accredited institutions of higher education in the Republic of Serbia.

Formal education is education provided and gained in the framework of an organized and structured learning context, in an educational institution and according to a verified curriculum, which finishes with the issuance of a public document specifying the degree of education acquired, i.e., of the officially recognized qualification gained.

(2) All terms used in this Rulebook in either the masculine or feminine gender are to be understood as including both genders.

Article 3 (Aims and principles)

(1) The goal of this Rulebook is to facilitate international and domestic mobility of faculty and students, and to improve and facilitate the recognition of qualifications.

(2) The principles underlying the recognition of qualifications are as follows:

- Anyone has the right to apply for the recognition of a foreign diploma or certificate of education, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning;
- The recognition process is the same for everyone, with discrimination prohibited on any grounds, whether actual or assumed, such as sex, race, sexual preference, physical or any other disability, marital status, skin color, language, religious affiliation, political or any other views, national, ethnic or social background, affiliation with an ethnic community, property, birth, age or any other characteristic, i.e., any other circumstance unrelated to the value of the educational qualification whose recognition is being applied for;
- The recognition criteria are transparent and consistent, to ensure process equality for all potential applicants;
- Information related to the recognition process must be available to applicants;
- Once a study program is recognized, the same decision will apply to all other identical cases;
- The recognition process confers on the applicant all legal rights to continue their education as are enjoyed in the country recognizing the qualification;
- All applicants have the right to file a complaint against a recognition decision.

(3) Other principles and guidelines are also adhered to in the recognition process, in accordance with the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region ("Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina", no. 16/03 – International Agreements) and the supporting documents, the UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (as revised in the EHEA Ministerial Conference held in Yerevan in May 2015), and other national and international higher education policies and guidelines.

PART II.
RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS AWARDED BY FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

(Process and criteria for recognizing higher education qualifications awarded by foreign higher education institutions for the purpose of continuing education at the University)

Article 4.
(Active legitimation and authority)

- (1) The recognition process is initiated after a person has submitted an application to continue their education at the University.
- (2) Entitled to recognition are citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, foreign nationals, stateless persons, asylum seekers, persons who have been granted refugee status, and persons who have been granted subsidiary protection status.
- (3) Also entitled to recognition are those persons who, for justifiable reasons and despite repeated attempts, have failed to provide evidence of a qualification of education, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning, while requesting that it be recognized.
- (4) An application is submitted to the competent Faculty/Academy by filling out the form contained in this Rulebook and forming a component part thereof.

Article 5.
(Documentation)

- (1) The following documents are to be submitted alongside a completed copy of the foreign educational qualification recognition application form:
 - Diploma/degree/certificate, either the original or a certified copy, or other evidence of a formal qualification, i.e., of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired, which proves the acquisition of a qualification or of knowledge, skills and competencies;
 - Diploma supplement;
 - Transcript of records, i.e., a list of completed courses (passed examinations) and ECTS points earned, issued by a higher education institution otherwise not issuing diploma supplements;
 - Transcript of records, i.e., a list of completed courses (passed examinations), if the qualification was issued in a country that does not follow the ECTS system;
 - Curriculum, officially issued or certified by the competent higher education institution or downloaded from its official web page, i.e., its summary containing a link at which the curriculum can be found, exactly equivalent to that which the applicant followed;
 - Certified copies of previously obtained educational qualifications, if relevant for the applicant's overall higher education attainment;
 - CV (a completed European Curriculum Vitae form);
 - Copy of a document proving the applicant's citizenship, or a statement by the applicant in which they claim statelessness;
 - Document that proves the applicant has changed their name and/or surname;

- Degree completion paper, where one led to the acquisition of the qualification (the original, a certified copy or an electronic copy);
- Statement by the applicant that they allow the verification of the qualification information;
- Proof of payment of the administrative fee.

(2) If any of the documents listed in Section (1) of this Article is not in one of the official languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the applicant will also submit its certified translation.

(3) In case an application is either incomplete or unclear, the applicant will have 30 days to complete or clarify it.

(4) Should the applicant fail to complete or clarify the application within the time specified, it will be deemed invalid and rejected accordingly.

(5) The applicant may complain against the decision deeming their application invalid.

Article 6. (Recognition committee)

(1) Qualification recognition is carried out by a committee, as an expert body of the competent University department, proposed by the dean and appointed by the Academic and Research Council of the department, i.e. Faculty/Academy.

(2) The committee appointment decision as defined in Section (1) of this Article specifies the number, members and duration of appointment of the committee, as well as other issues of relevance for the work of the committee.

(3) The committee will have the adequate administrative and technical support of the administrative and other offices of the Faculty/Academy.

Article 7. (Transparency)

(1) Information about the process and criteria of academic recognition of foreign qualifications of formal and non-formal education, as well as other forms of education and learning, must be publicly available.

(2) The recognition process is part of the internal quality assurance system, and like other activities and operations in the area of higher education, it is subject to external evaluation, in accordance with applicable rules and regulations.

Article 8. (Document validation)

(1) As part of the process of academic recognition of an educational qualification, acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, the committee may check the validity of documents, i.e. information about the gained qualification.

(2) The committee may check the validity of a document either directly or through another authorized institution (Ministry for the Development of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Information Society of the Republic of Srpska; Center for Information and Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications; etc.).

Article 9.
(Qualification/document validation and evaluation)

(1) The recognition process includes document validation as specified in Article 8 of this Rulebook, administrative and technical processing of the application, and evaluation of previously obtained qualifications on the basis of the documents submitted.

(2) Administrative processing includes examining an application to ensure it contains all the mandatory documents, the documents are valid, and they have been submitted by an authorized person/entity.

(3) Technical processing includes obtaining relevant information about the education and qualification system of the country where the foreign educational qualification was issued, the status of the issuing institution, and all relevant information about the acquired qualification, i.e. education:

- Information about the education and qualification system of the country and the status of the issuing institution means information about the existence of a national qualification framework and its correspondence to the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) and, if applicable, to the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA); status of the education institution and the degree program; as well as all other information relevant for evaluating the educational qualification and knowledge, skills and competencies acquired;
- Information about the educational qualification and knowledge, skills and competencies acquired, i.e., learning outcomes, includes information about the level of the foreign educational qualification and knowledge, skills and competencies acquired, on the basis of information about their status in the qualification system of the country in which they were acquired, i.e., their status in the national qualification framework (where one exists); correspondence to the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning and, if applicable, to the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area; and information about the level of the completed degree program and the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired, relative to UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED);
- Information about the educational qualification and knowledge, skills and competencies acquired also includes information about the rights granted in the country where the qualification was obtained; the possibility of gaining education through evaluating non-formal and other kinds of education and learning, as well as of acquiring education, partly or fully, through distance learning programs; and distance learning quality assurance.

(4) The submitted documents are evaluated to ensure the foreign educational qualification and knowledge, skills and competencies acquired do not differ to an extent that precludes recognition. The evaluation should especially ensure the differences in the key elements of one or more syllabi that led to the educational qualification, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning are not of such magnitude that they preclude the recognition of the educational qualification or learning outcomes.

(5) When evaluating an educational qualification, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning, the committee will ensure there are no major differences possibly precluding recognition, especially taking into consideration the following:

- The level of the educational qualification, degree program, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning; enrollment eligibility; program duration and quality; and the rights granted to the qualification holder in the country where it was awarded;
- The workload, as expressed in ECTS points or another credit point system; the number of hours spent studying or learning; the preparation of a graduation paper, etc.;
- The quality of the educational institution and degree program, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning;
- The profile of the degree program, non-formal education and other forms of education and learning, ensuring the learning outcomes of non-formal education and other forms of education and learning correspond to the learning outcomes as specified in the given degree program as administered by the University, from those at the level of individual courses to those at the level of the degree.

Article 10.
(Recognition of foreign educational qualifications)

(1) In case the differences between two qualifications, a foreign one and a local one, preclude the full recognition of the former, the competent department/body will consider the possibility of other forms of recognition, conditional, partial and alternative, pursuant to the principles and provisions as stated in the documents listed in Article 3, Section (3) of this Rulebook.

(2) Conditional recognition means a qualification is recognized at the level of the qualification as such and the applicant allowed to enroll in the corresponding degree program, under an obligation to meet all the requirements previously unfulfilled for enrollment in the program (pass examinations, write and submit term papers, conduct research, complete a practicum, etc.), while enrolled in the program.

(3) Partial recognition means the recognition of individual credit points, i.e. learning outcomes, allowing the applicant to enroll in a degree program at a level lower than that originally applied for, and recognizing the examinations passed, i.e., learning outcomes achieved previously.

(4) Alternative recognition means the recognition of an educational qualification, i.e. of learning outcomes at a level lower than the one applied for, or they are recognized at the same level, but the applicant is granted the right to enroll in a program similar to that applied for.

(5) Provided the higher education institution has sufficient capacity, it can provide special education to applicants outside its degree programs, in order to eliminate the major differences precluding them from continuing their education and enrolling in the program originally applied for.

(6) If an application cannot be granted alternative recognition either, it will be rejected.

(7) The decision rejecting a recognition application will state the reasons for the rejection and advise the applicant on what to do to be permitted to continue their education.

Article 11.
(Deadlines and legal means)

(1) Recognition applications are decided upon within 60 days at the latest from the submission of a valid application.

(2) Recognition applications are decided upon by the Academic and Research/Art Council of the competent Faculty/Academy, following a fully justified proposal submitted by the committee.

(3) On the basis of the decision of the Academic and Research/Art Council of the competent Faculty/Academy, the dean makes a decision specifying the year and study cycle the candidate may enroll in to extend their education, as well as the number of ECTS points previously earned and the requirements yet to be fulfilled.

(4) A transcript of records is submitted and constitutes a part of the decision as specified in Section (3) of this Article.

(5) A complaint may be filed with the University Senate against the recognition decision as specified in Section (3) of this Article within 15 days of the applicant receiving the decision.

(6) The decision of the Senate is final.

(7) The final decision of the Senate can be appealed against by initiating an administrative litigation at an authorized court within 30 days of notifying the applicant of the decision.

Article 12.
(Records)

(1) The University has an obligation to keep a register and maintain records of processed recognition applications, as well as to enter data on the recognition of foreign educational qualifications in the unified University Information System, in accordance with applicable rules and regulations.

(2) Following the completion of a recognition process, the original qualification, i.e. evidence of obtained education, knowledge, skills and competencies, is to be returned to the applicant, and a copy thereof made and preserved in the records.

(Recognition of non-formal and other forms of education and learning)

Article 13.
(Documentation)

(1) The guidelines applying to the recognition of qualifications obtained through formal education will analogously apply to the process of recognition of foreign qualifications obtained through non-formal and other kinds of education and learning.

(2) In addition to an application form requesting the recognition of non-formal and other forms of education and learning, the following documents are to be submitted:

- Diploma/certificate proving the completion of a study period/training and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies, issued by an education institution, a training and professional development center or another institution, confirming that the document holder has partly completed the respective education program/training, i.e., acquired the corresponding knowledge, skills and competencies;
- Documents proving the acquisition of non-formal and other forms of education and learning, such as certificates, occupational/work programs, employment contracts, confirmations issued by employers or institutions that hired the applicant, etc.;
- Certified copies of previously obtained educational qualifications, if relevant for the applicant's overall higher education obtained;
- CV (a completed European Curriculum Vitae form);
- Copy of a document proving the applicant's citizenship, or a statement by the applicant in which they claim statelessness;
- Document that proves the applicant has changed their name and/or surname;
- Statement by the applicant consenting to the verification of the acquired qualification/completed training information;
- Proof of payment of the administrative fee.

(3) If any of the documents listed in Section (1) of this Article is not in one of the official languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the applicant will also submit its certified translation.

(4) In case the submitted documents do not allow the committee to determine precisely the learning outcomes, the committee may organize that the applicant be tested as appropriate.

(5) Depending on the nature of the studies and courses whose recognition is being applied for, the testing as specified in the previous section may take the form of an oral or written assessment or a practical demonstration of the achieved learning outcomes, in accordance with the relevant guidelines and standards as adhered to in the formal education as administered by the University.

(Recognition of foreign qualifications of refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers or persons enjoying subsidiary protection)

Article 14.

(Evidence and provision of evidence)

(1) If the person applying to continue their education is a refugee, displaced person, asylum seeker or a person enjoying subsidiary protection, who also does not possess the required documents, the committee will assess the validity of the applicant's personal history information on the basis of their biographic information document/personal history statement and other submitted documents, treating each such case as independent.

(2) In assessing the validity of the submitted evidence, the committee will take into consideration and evaluate all previously acquired qualifications, submitted diplomas, certificates, program descriptions, work experience, as well as all other documentation submitted by the person applying to continue their education.

(3) In case the committee is unable to verify the information stated in the biographic information document/personal history statement, the necessary information will be requested from the relevant

ministries in the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as from the higher education institutions stated in the biographic information document.

(4) Should the committee confirm the accuracy of the information stated in the biographic information document/personal history statement, it is to explain the reasons for accepting the information to be accurate in its decision granting the applicant the right to continue their education.

PART III.
EQUALIZATION OF PREVIOUSLY AWARDED QUALIFICATIONS WITH NEW QUALIFICATIONS

Article 15.
(Process)

(1) Holders of degrees received from the University in accordance with provisions previously in effect have the right, without being obliged to do so, to apply for and have their previously obtained degrees equalized with the new degrees.

(2) The process of equalization of degrees previously awarded by the University with the new degrees is initiated as requested by holders of degrees previously awarded by the University.

(3) The Faculty/Academy authorized to process applications as specified in Section (1) of this Article is that which issued the degree, i.e., that which is competent for that particular area of study at the time of the submission of the application as specified in Section (1) of this Article.

(4) Equalization applications are submitted by filling out the form contained in this Rulebook and forming a component part thereof.

Article 16.
(Documentation)

Along with an equalization application form, a certified copy of the degree/diploma and other documents required for making the equalization decision are submitted.

Article 17.
(Processing of and deciding on equalization applications)

(1) On receiving an equalization application, the dean of the Faculty/Academy appoints a three-member equalization committee.

(2) The committee prepares a report on the equalization application, with a proposal on how to decide on the application.

(3) In proposing a decision on an equalization application, the committee will refer to the law and delegated legislation harmonized with the law that specify the use of titles, acquisition of scientific and professional qualifications, and the list of professional, academic and scientific qualifications in effect at the time of deciding on the application.

(4) Decisions on equalization are made by the dean of the Faculty/Academy within 60 days at the latest from the submission of a valid application.

(5) A complaint may be filed with the University Senate against an equalization decision within 15 days of the receipt of the decision by the applicant.

(6) The decision of the Senate is final.

(7) The final decision of the Senate can be appealed against by initiating an administrative litigation at an authorized court within 30 days of notifying the applicant of the decision.

Article 18.
(General common equalization criteria)

In proposing a decision on an equalization application, the committee will be guided by the following general common equalization criteria:

- According to the new system of titles/degrees, no equivalents exist of previously acquired two-year further education qualifications, specialist qualifications obtained after the completion of five or six-year bachelor degree programs, and the academic title of master of science/art (*magistar*).
- Qualifications previously obtained after the completion of three-year bachelor degree programs and their corresponding professional titles, as stipulated by the law, are to be equalized with the new title of *bachelor*, with the actual qualification gained and 180 ECTS points acquired stated accordingly;
- Qualifications previously obtained after the completion of four-year bachelor degree programs and their corresponding professional titles, as stipulated by the law, are to be equalized with the new title of *bachelor*, with the actual qualification gained and 240 ECTS points acquired stated accordingly;
- Previously awarded specialist professional degrees/titles obtained after the completion of four-year bachelor degree programs and one-year specialist courses are to be equalized with the new title of *master*, with the actual qualification gained and 300 ECTS points acquired stated accordingly;
- Higher-education degrees and their corresponding professional titles, as stipulated by the law, obtained previously after five- or six-year study programs are to be equalized with the new title of *master*, with the actual qualification gained and 300 or 360 ECTS points acquired stated accordingly.

PART IV.
TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 19.
(Costs)

(1) The costs of the processes as stipulated by this Rulebook are to be paid by the applicants.

(2) The fees as stated in Section (1) of this Article are specified by the Managing Board of the University.

(3) Asylum seekers, persons enjoying refugee status and persons enjoying subsidiary protection status are exempt from the payment of the qualification recognition fee.

Article 20.
(Termination of rulebooks previously in effect)

When this Rulebook is put into effect, it will make null and void the Rulebook on the Process of Equalization of Previously Obtained Degrees, the Process of Evaluation of Higher Education Degrees for the Purpose of Continuation of Education at the University of Banja Luka of 11 July 2012, and the Rulebook on the Process of Equalization of Degrees Previously Awarded by the Faculty of Medicine, University of Banja Luka, of 31 January 2013.

Article 21.
(Applications in progress)

Recognition applications submitted prior to this Rulebook coming into effect will be processed in accordance with provisions previously stipulating academic recognition.

Article 22.
(Other applicable legislation)

Provisions of the Republic of Srpska General Administrative Procedure Act ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska", nos. 13/2002, 87/2007 – rev., 50/2010 and 66/2018) will apply to all other issues not defined by this Rulebook.

Article 23.
(Rulebook enactment)

This Rulebook will come into effect eight days after its publication on the web page of the University.

Ref.: 02/04-3.409-6/19

Date: 28 February 2019

CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE
R E C T O R
Prof. Radoslav Gajanin, PhD, sgd.