

Procedure Title: Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure

Area Code:	EXAM
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Approving Authority:	Academic Council

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the process for the recognition, application, assessment and administration of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for initial or advanced admission to a Programme. RPL is the generic term for learning assessment mechanisms such as Accreditation of Prior Learning or Advanced Academic Standing, which are used within Higher Education to describe the awarding of credit / exemptions to applicants on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred prior to admission. Recognition of prior learning involves awarding the applicants recognition in the form of initial or advanced admission to a programme, credits within programme, exemptions to modules or stages within a programme or an award. The learning can be certified or experiential.

Recognition of Prior Learning is an important element of EU policy for widening access to qualifications and supporting lifelong learning. In common with its European partners, the Irish government has made a commitment to support RPL and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 established the right for a learner to get recognition for ECTS (European Credit transfer system) credits for prior learning. The philosophy underlying RPL is to enable and encourage people to enter or re-enter formal education, leading to qualifications recognised by the National Framework of Qualifications.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- A learner who has been accepted for and is registered on a programme of study at the Institute.
- A person who has applied to the Institute for a direct application or add-on programme and does not meet the standard entry requirements.

This procedure addresses:

- Prior Certified Learning: Learning that has already been accredited by an awarding institute. Prior certified learning can also include international qualifications.

- **Prior Experiential Learning:** Learning acquired from experience or learning achieved from non-accredited bodies. (Credit can be awarded only for demonstrated achievement of specific learning outcomes, not experience per se.)
- A combination of the above.

3. Reference Documents

Information on RPL procedures can be found on the Institute's website, the CUA RPL website.

QQI Assessment and Standards (revised 2013).

4. Procedure

4.1 Principles of Recognition of Prior learning

- Prior learning refers to learning which has occurred before admission to a programme or to the relevant stage of a programme.
- Prior learning should encompass all forms of learning - certified and uncertified.
- Participation is a voluntary matter for the individual.
- Recognition of prior learning should provide opportunities for access, transfer and progression to education and training and for the achievement of an award.
- The process of recognising prior learning should maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.
- The policies, processes and practices for the recognition of prior learning should be clearly stated and documented and available to all potential learners.
- Guidance and support should be made available for applicants and all involved in the processes of recognition of prior learning.
- An appropriate appeals mechanism should be in place.
- Recognition of prior learning will normally be given for complete modules only.
- There should be no limit placed on the maximum credits allowed to be achieved via recognition in the non-award stages of a programme.
- Recognition of prior learning will normally only be given for a maximum of 50% of credits in award stage.
- Applicants that gain exemptions through Recognition of Prior Certified Learning in award year are entitled to an unclassified award only, as per 4.2.5. Applicants seeking recognition for prior certified learning in an award stage should be made aware of the implications of an unclassified award.
- Learners that gain exemptions through Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning in award year will receive a grade and are therefore eligible to receive a classified award.
- Applicants who gain exemptions through recognition of prior learning cannot avail of standard compensation rules (if compensation rules apply).

- The outcome of successful recognition of prior learning applications should be noted at relevant examination boards though applicants may be provisionally informed to facilitate module completion.
- When an applicant receives recognition for prior certified learning, he/she cannot use the same prior learning to gain further exemptions in additional programmes.

4.2 Time Scale

In order to allow for timely processing of applications, all completed application for module exemptions must be made by the targeted deadlines below:

	Prior Certified Learning	Prior Experiential Learning
Closing date for RPL application	Within 10 working days of module commencement	Within 10 working days of module commencement
Evidence Submission date (e.g. Portfolio/copies of certificates)	Within 10 working days of module commencement	Within 20 working days of module commencement

- Applicants seeking recognition of prior experiential learning for module exemptions are advised to commence the process of preparing their portfolio well in advance of these deadlines.
- Applicants seeking recognition of prior experiential learning for advanced admissions to a programme are advised to commence the process 3 months prior to commencement of programme.

The Institute will, within reason, provided all relevant supporting documentation has been provided, and all procedural matters adhered to by the applicant; undertake to resolve the application (not including appeal procedures) prior to the commencement of the relevant teaching period.

4.3 Limitations on applications for credits for RPCL and RPEL

Credits will only be granted for modules on a programme that leads to an award. A learner may apply for credits at all stages of a programme. Some programmes may require additional limitations on the volume of exemptions allowed due to professional body regulations.

Maximum credits/exemptions allowed (the maximum credits/exemptions allowed for RPL in an award year shall not exceed a total of 50%, i.e. 50% prior certified learning OR 50% prior experiential learning OR a combination of both):

Limitation	Prior Certified Learning	Prior Experiential Learning	Combination of Prior Certified and Experiential Learning
Maximum credits/exemptions allowed for RPL for Non-Award stages	100%	100%	100%
Maximum credits/exemption allowed for RPL in Award Year	50%	50%	50%

4.4 Assessor

The Assessor is the Head of Department or a person nominated by the Head of Department as the assessor. This person shall have sufficient knowledge of the subject area in order to assess the application in line with the requirements of this procedure.

4.5 Application Procedure

The table below set out the PRL application process based on the type of exemption

Certified learning – module	<u>Application for exemptions</u> The applicant should complete the application form EXAM012_001 and submit to the Assessor. Submit electronically (online students) or in paper copy (Full time students)
Certified – Stage	<u>Application for advanced entry</u> The applicant should complete the Direct Application form on the IT Sligo website, https://www.itsligo.ie/study-at-it-sligo/add-ondirect-application-courses/ or on the course page.
Experiential – module	<u>Application for Exemptions:</u> The applicant should complete a portfolio of evidence as part of their application, using www.myexperience.ie platform.
Experiential – Stage	<u>Advanced entry / Stage Exemption</u> The applicant should complete a portfolio of evidence as part of their application, using www.myexperience.ie platform
Combination of certified and experiential modules or Stage	The applicant should complete a portfolio of evidence as part of their application, using www.myexperience.ie platform. A completed Form EXAM012_001 may be scanned and uploaded for the certified learning if desired.

4.6 Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

Prior Certified Learning is where an applicant has already been awarded a qualification for a formal programme or module taken at another institution or training organisation. This prior learning can be recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications and may entitle the applicant to:

- Admission to a programme or course of study

- The award of advanced academic standing
- The award of exemptions from some modules of a programme

4.6.1 Pre Application RPCL

Students are advised to have an initial discussion on the possibility of RPL with their Head of Department or Programme Coordinator or module Coordinator. It is the applicant's sole responsibility to provide adequate documentation, in a timely manner, to allow for a decision to be made in relation to their application.

4.6.2 Evidence RPCL

Documentation required for assessment of prior certified learning will typically include:

- a) Full transcript of results from a programme of study
- b) Module and course descriptors (syllabus)
- c) Learning outcomes

4.6.3 Assessment RPCL

When an applicant presents prior certified learning in order to gain admission, advanced academic standing or exemption(s), the assessor will base her/his decision to grant this exemption or advanced academic standing on the following:

- a) Level of Prior Award in the National Framework of Qualifications.
In the case of exemptions applications, the prior certified learning which the applicant is basing his/her exemption on must be the same level or at a higher level in the framework than the level the applicant is seeking the exemption in. The process of recognising prior learning should maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.
- b) Comparison of learning outcomes
The assessor should compare the learning outcomes of the prior certified learning to the learning outcomes of the module(s)/programme the applicant is seeking the exemption(s) in. If the assessor believes the learning outcomes are sufficiently similar, then an exemption(s) may be awarded. It is at the discretion of the assessor to decide what is sufficiently similar.
- c) Currency of Prior Certified Learning
The Prior Certified Learning must have been achieved in a comparatively appropriate time frame (in some instances this may be in the last 3, 5 or 10 years - dependent on the learning achieved), e.g. computing learning 10 years ago is of limited benefit today on a current programme, whereas psychology outcomes may be more timeless.
- d) Foreign qualifications
Applicants seeking recognition for prior certified learning for foreign qualifications should contact Qualifications Recognition (www.qualificationsrecognitions.ie) to have their qualifications aligned with the appropriate Irish qualification.

4.6.4 Guidelines RPCL

- a) Applicants must continue to attend class until a decision has been made (and written confirmation received) on whether to grant the exemption or not.
- b) The assessor should make a decision regarding the application within 10 working days of receipt of the application. Assessors have the right to recommend that exemptions be granted with conditions/recommendations.
- c) When Prior Certified Learning is accepted as the basis for granting an exemption on a programme of study, further application using the same learning for the granting of further exemptions in the same programme will normally not be considered.

4.6.5 Outcomes RPCL

- a) Prior certified learning may entitle the candidate to exemptions on a programme, not credits. As this certified learning has already received credit, the applicant does not receive credits for it again, but recognition in the form of exemptions.
- b) Applicants that gain exemptions through Recognition of Prior Certified Learning in award year are normally entitled to an unclassified award only, see QQI Sectoral Convention 5 (Assessment and Standards, revised 2013), *'if the module is one that would normally contribute to the award classification, such exemption should only entitle a learner to an unclassified award unless it is feasible to recognise, or award a grade. Any grade awarded /recognised should be consistent with the prior award classification and the module grades in the associated Europass Diploma Supplement'*.
- c) When an exemption is granted, an X is entered for that module in the exam record system by the Administration Manager to appear on the broadsheet, the overall GPA (and award level, where relevant) is based only on those modules that were assessed. The RPL assessor must attend the examination board meeting.

4.7 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

Recognition of prior experiential learning involves the awarding of credit for learning from experience. In this case, the applicant must demonstrate that the required equivalent learning has been achieved by for example producing a Portfolio of Evidence to support the claim for access or credit. Other assessment tools such as exam, assignment, interview or observation can also be used to assess prior experiential learning. As a general principle, credit is given for learning, not for experience per se. The portfolio of evidence must be written in such a way that the matching of knowledge, skills and competencies of the module learning outcomes to the prior learning is clearly demonstrated. All communications, comments, interviews and decisions to be recorded in www.myexperience.ie.

4.7.1 Pre - Applications RPEL

Students are advised to have an initial discussion on the possibility of RPEL with their Head of Department or Programme Coordinator. It is the applicant's sole responsibility to provide adequate documentation, in a timely manner, to allow for a decision to be made in relation to their application.

4.7.2 Evidence RPEL

The evidence the applicant has to submit will be based on the learning outcomes of the module(s)/programme he/she seeks credits for. Evidence may include but is not limited to :

- References
- CV
- Job descriptions and experiences
- Details of any training completed
- Certificates for qualifications, training courses etc.
- Sample work (e.g. drawings, minutes for meetings, business plan etc).
- Evidence from the applicant's personal life
- Published work
- Professional licenses/registrations or membership of professional organisations
- Acknowledged accomplishments
- Relevant recreational activities or hobbies

The applicant may be required to provide verification from previous and current employers that the learning stated has been achieved by get applicant.

Appendix 1 may be completed by the assessor to document the assessment and uploaded as a summary of the assessment.

4.7.3 Assessment RPEL

- a) The portfolio of evidence must be presented in such a way that the matching of the knowledge, skills and competencies of the module learning outcomes to the prior learning is clearly demonstrated.
- b) Assessors must satisfy themselves that the learning gained match the minimum standard of the learning outcomes on the module for which exemption is being sought.
- c) Assessors may recommend an exemption is granted with conditions, e.g. that certain additional learning is undertaken by the applicant prior to commencing the programme.

4.7.4 Guidelines RPEL

- a) The portfolio is assessed and graded by an assessor.
- b) As part of the assessment, the assessor may interview the applicant.
- c) When assessing portfolios, it is important to consider the currency of the prior learning. It must be achieved within a suitable time frame, depending on the nature of the learning achieved.
- d) Applicants should receive a grade for their portfolio of evidence which carries equal weight to modules taken in the conventional method. Assessors must satisfy themselves that the assessment methods used to determine the standard of the experiential learning gained be equivalent to assessment methods applied to conventional applicants.
- e) Assessors have the right to recommend that credits be granted with conditions, e.g. certain research is carried out, attendance at certain workshops etc.

- f) Portfolios of evidence should go through the same quality assurance procedures as exams/assignments submitted by applicants completing the programme in the conventional manner.
- g) Submission of a portfolio does not guarantee that the applicant gains credits.

4.7.5 Outcomes for RPEL

For prior experiential learning an exemption or a grade may be awarded. However, learners that gain exemptions through Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning in award year will receive a grade and are therefore eligible to receive a classified award.

For non-award years it is at the discretion of a Programme Board as to which is most appropriate. As per QQI Assessment and Standards, revised 2013, *'If the module is one which contributes to the award classification, prior learning achievement must be graded in order for the award to be classified. Otherwise, an unclassified award should be made. Where the module does not contribute to the award classification, the prior learning achievement does not need to be graded'*.

- a) When an exemption is granted, an X is entered for that module in the exam broadsheet, the overall GPA (and award level, where relevant) is based only on those modules that were assessed. The assessor must attend the examination board meeting.
- b) Where a grade is given the grade is entered on the exam broadsheet, the credits for that module are awarded and the overall GPA (and Award level, where relevant) is based on all modules that were assessed. The assessor must attend the examination board.

4.8 Communication of Decision

- a) Full time student exemptions are communicated to the student by the School Administration and copied to the assessor.
- b) Applications for fulltime advanced entry is communicated by the Admissions office
- c) Online part-time student exemptions are communicated by the School Administration and copied to the assessor. For on line students the administration manager also informs online admissions in order to make an adjustment to the student account, if applicable.
- d) Online part-time applications for advanced entry are communicated by the assessor through the student application system.

4.9 Appeals

The applicant has a right to appeal. The appeal should be made in writing to the VP Academic Affairs and Registrar within 5 working days of the initial decision. The appeal will be considered by an independent Head of Department along with a qualified assessor not involved in the initial assessment. Their decision is final. The result of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the applicant and copied to the appropriate Head of Department. There is a cost associated with the appeal, set by the VP Academic Affairs and Registrar on an annual basis.

4.9.1 Grounds for appeal

- That additional information relevant to the application is now available that could not have been made available at the time of application
- That incorrect information was submitted, which the applicant now wishes to have revised
- That the applicant considers that their prior learning was not fully taken into consideration by the assessors.

4.10 Fee

Fees are agreed by the Institute's Executive and reviewed on an annual basis.

5. Records generated by this Policy

- The records in relation to application for PRCL on form EXAM012_001 for all live and historical applications will be maintained by the School Administration Manager in the respective schools.
- The record in relation to application for PREL will be available through the www.myexperience.ie platform and must be available to external examiners, audit and review panels and related processes and personnel.

6. Measurement of Effectiveness of this procedure

Not applicable at this time.

7. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Issue Date
001	Closing Date for acceptance & Exemptions not granted in award years	18/11/04
002	Authority to grant exemption granted to Schools Responsibility of Head of Department	23/09/05
003	Review	09/05/06
004	Include APEL A Council 12/12/07	12/12/07
005	Standards & Examinations dates and fees	7/6/2008
006	Replaces ADM004/151 Granting of Eligibility for Admission onto a programme of a programme for students with Prior Non-Accredited (Experiential) Learning) RPL fees for prior learning completed at IT Sligo removal of clause that stated under no circumstances should applications be accepted after teaching commences	May 2010
007	Major revision to reflect the draft CU Alliance RPL Policy Removed references to OLF	09/06/14
008	Updated and reviewed format. Clarify wording and process flow for application, separate out the application form. Clarify administration of approved exemptions.	12/06/20

Appendix 1: Assessment & Recommendation of Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

Applicants Details: Completed in myexperience.ie.

Programme of Study: _____ **Year of Study:** _____

Add additional rows as required

Module Title	Evaluation tasks carried out	Score/Confirmation of L/O being met	Approved / Not Approved	Basis for recommendation	Assessor name and signature

Date of Interview (if applicable): _____

Comments/Conditions (if any):

Signature of Head of Department: _____ **Date:** _____

Verified: VP Academic Affairs & Registrar: _____ **Date:** _____

List of attached documentation (if any):