

## Working Party on RPL Policy

### Report to Academic Council – November 2008 Work in Progress

#### Background

The Working Party on RPL Policy was established to consider revision of the Institute's RPL policy and process in the context of national and International policy developments and the Modularisation & Semesterisation process within the Institute.

Over the past nine years extensive experience of the RPL process has been gained within the Institute where in excess of 2500 students have been awarded credits and/or grades for learning gained prior to admission to Institute programmes.

Consequently, the Working Party wishes to present the following for consideration by Council

Two main categories should be recognised within RPL and should be treated separately and differently:

1. Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL): The award of credit for uncertificated learning gained from experience. It should be noted that academic credit can be awarded only for achievement of learning outcomes, not for experience per se.
2. Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning: The recognition of formal learning for which certification has been awarded through a bona-fide educational institution or other education/training provider. Under the principle that such credit should only be awarded once, such prior learning is accorded recognition rather than accreditation.

Learning within the first category above is composed of non-formal and informal learning. The process of giving formal recognition to this type of learning can also be described as the Recognition of Prior non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL). This is the term used by OECD to describe this process.

The following definitions find general acceptance

**formal learning** - which takes place through programmes of study or training that are delivered by education or training providers, and which attract credits/awards.

**non-formal learning** – which takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal certification. Examples of non-formal learning are: learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace or voluntary sector.

**informal learning** – which takes place through life and work experience (and is sometimes referred to as experiential learning). Often, it is learning that is unintentional and the learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it has contributed to his or her knowledge, skills or competence.

It is further suggested that three generally different situations arise

1. RPL for advanced entry
2. RPL at non-award stages
3. RPL at award stages

### **1 Advanced entry**

In the case where entry is sought to an advanced stage of a programme, a learning portfolio containing a combination of prior certificated and/or experiential learning may be prepared to show evidence of learning equivalent to that defined for successful completion of the stage immediately prior to that for which entry is sought. In this instance the relevant Head of Department, in consultation with the course board, will arrange for the submitted materials to be assessed and for the conduct of any other assessment process deemed necessary to determine whether admission is recommended or not.

The outcomes of this process will be submitted to the Registrar's Office Board along with information on the supporting documentation.

### **2 Non Award Stages**

Recognition for *prior certificated (formal) learning* may be awarded in the form of exemptions;

- for complete modules;
  - where the learning presented and verified is assessed as meeting satisfactorily the learning outcomes of the module in question
- marks will not be assigned.
  - where an end of year classification is to be calculated, such calculations will be based entirely on the modules for which marks have been awarded.

Recognition for *prior non-formal and informal learning* will be granted in the form of credits;

- where the learning presented and verified is assessed as meeting satisfactorily the learning outcomes of the module in question
- marks will be assigned and will contribute to classification of the award.

### **3 Award Stages**

Recognition for *prior certificated (formal) learning* may be awarded in the form of exemption;

- for complete modules;
- where the learning presented and verified is assessed as meeting satisfactorily the learning outcomes of the module in question
- up to a maximum of one third of the available credits

Recognition for *prior non-formal and informal learning* will be granted in the form of credits;

- for complete modules;
- where the learning presented and verified is assessed as meeting satisfactorily the learning outcomes of the module in question
- marks will be assigned and will contribute to classification of the award.

**Items Under discussion**

The following additional items are currently being addressed by the Working Party:

- Streamlining the implementation of RPL to ensure early feedback/recommendation to candidates
- Ratification of results through the module examination process
- Establishment of a central archive of precedence in respect of prior certificated learning
- Fee structure for RPL processes

Submitted on behalf of the Working Party on RPL Policy.

Membership: Stephen Cassidy, Catherine Frehill, Phil O Leary, Irene Sheridan, Paul Sliney.

Signed



Ray Coughlan

Working Party Chair  
November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008.