1. Document Details

Title:	**Policy and Procedure for Exit and Embedded Awards in CIT Taught Degree Programmes**
Author(s):	Academic Council Working Party on Exit Awards
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Important Note: If the 'Status' of this document reads 'Draft', it has not been finalised and should not be relied upon.

2. Revision History

Version Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes tracked?
1.0		New policy	

3. Relevant/Related Existing Internal Documents

4. Relevant/Related Existing External Documents

QQI	November 2017	*Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*

5. Consultation History

This document has been prepared in consultation with the following bodies/functions:

- Consultation of Heads of Department, School and Faculty on key policy points via questionnaire (April 2018)

- Review of relevant sample regulations, policies and forms of various national and international HE providers (incl. DCU, DkIT, IADT, ITB, ITT, LIT, UL, University of Sidney, Manchester Metropolitan University)

6. Approvals

This document requires following approvals (in order where applicable):

Name	Date	Details of Approval Required
Academic Council	**5 October 2018**	First approval of new policy
Governing Body	**13 December 2018**	

7. Context and Purpose

The Preface to the current National Access Plan notes:

> "Ireland is well on the road to recovery after the economic shocks of recent years. If this is to be sustainable, however, more graduates will be needed to supply the expertise and skills required in vital areas of our economy. We must, for economic and social reasons, ensure that talent from all parts of society is mobilised." (Higher Education Authority, National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015 – 2019, Dec. 2015, p.3)

It furthermore emphasises that

> "[t]he access mission must be fully integrated across all faculties and areas of work in institutions, and this will help us achieve an improved experience and better outcome for all students in higher education." (ibid.)

CIT offers a wide range of highly regarded pre- and post-entry supports to help learners both enter into and remain in higher education. These include, for instance, the services of the Access Office, Academic Learning Support Service and AnSEO, well-developed procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning, and Linked Schools and Cork Colleges Progression Schemes.

The supports available to learners in the advanced stages of their studies aim to assist the learners to complete their academic programme and gain a qualification which will enable them to participate in the labour market. One such support is the provision of exit awards on CIT programmes where these have been identified as viable options for learners unable to complete the programme.

This document aims to establish the policy and procedures of Cork Institute of Technology for the validation and making of exit awards in CIT taught undergraduate and graduate degree programmes.

In addition, it also defines certain exceptional circumstances under which embedded awards can be made to learners who continue on a programme.

8. Scope

This policy applies to all CIT taught degree programmes leading to major awards at NFQ Levels 7 – 9 from September 2018 onwards.

9. Definitions

The following definitions shall apply:

Target Award   The final award granted to learners who have gained the required credits and who have demonstrated the achievement of the overall intended learning outcomes specified for the programme for which they have registered. The target award thus represents the qualification which applicants expect to attain upon successful completion when they register on a programme.

Exit Award   A major classified award which may be made to a learner who does not complete the requirements for the target award of a programme but who has gained the required credits for, and demonstrated achievement of the learning outcomes specified for, a major award at a lower NFQ level and/or credit volume, as provided for at validation of the relevant programme. Exit awards are not awarded to learners who progress to and complete the target award stage of a programme as foreseen for their mode of study.

Embedded Award   An award associated with a programme of study which is embedded in another, related programme leading to a higher award (in terms of NFQ level and/or credit volume). Embedded major awards are generally offered as exit awards only, although some may additionally be available as target awards in their own right or may – under certain exceptional circumstances defined in this policy – be offered to certain groups of qualifying non-exiting learners. Lower-level awards in a traditional 'ladder' sequence of programmes are not considered to be embedded awards.

10. Audiences

This policy is addressed to all staff and students of Cork Institute of Technology. It is also of relevance for external members of relevant academic validation and review panels.

11. Responsible Officer(s)

Responsibility for maintenance of this policy lies with the Office of the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

12. Policy

A.   Principles

1.   *CIT Degree Programmes Incorporate Exit Awards*

In order to safeguard access of learners in adverse circumstances to higher education qualifications, CIT degree programmes leading to major awards at NFQ levels 7 – 9 normally incorporate one or more exit awards.

Normally, an exit award will be an embedded award of the associated target award.

The normal case would be that

- Bachelor programmes (L7) embed a Higher Certificate exit award (L6);
- Honours Bachelors (L8) embed exit awards at Higher Certificate (L6) and/or Bachelor (L7) level;
- Taught 90-credit Masters (L9) embed a 60-credit Postgraduate Certificate (L9).

It will be at the discretion of the faculties and their individual academic units to determine the most appropriate exit point(s) for each of their degree programmes in programme design and review,

mindful of the general CIT position on exit awards as set out in this policy. Where an ab-initio programme is to (continue to) be offered without any exit awards, there should be a sufficiently weighty rationale, such as professional registration requirements.

2. Purpose of Exit Awards

Exit awards enable qualifying learners unable to complete the programme for which they have registered to obtain an academic qualification for learning achieved at an NFQ level and/or credit volume lower than that of the target award.

3. Exit Awards Must Be Available and Must Be Applied For

Learners wishing to obtain an exit award must submit an individual application outlining the grounds for their request as per the procedure set out in Section B of this document.

Learners may only apply for existing exit awards, i.e. exit awards which, at the point of application, have been validated as exit awards for the degree programme on which the learner is registered.

There is no automatic entitlement to an exit award. Application should only be made if the learner can show to the satisfaction of their Head of Department that there are significant and exceptional grounds which prevent her or him from completing the programme on which s/he is enrolled.

Former learners who have already withdrawn from a programme may also apply for an exit award. To be considered for an exit award, former learners must have demonstrably gained the credits and achieved the learning outcomes specified for the exit award, and must apply within three (3) years of the date on which their withdrawal has formally been confirmed by CIT, as per the agreed procedure for exit awards.

4. Limitations on Re-registration

a) Exclusion Period for Re-registration on the Original Programme

Graduates in receipt of an exit award must not re-register on the programme which they exited, or progress to a more advanced stage of any other CIT programme, for a *minimum period of one (1) year from the date of their formal application for an exit award* (counting to the intended re-entry date, rather than the cut-off date for registration).

Within the period of exclusion, exiting learners shall however be entitled to apply for entry into and, if accepted, enter Stage 1 of another unrelated CIT degree programme or special award programme through the normal entry mechanisms. Exiting learners choosing to apply for entry into Stage 1 of another CIT programme shall be deemed new applicants and shall be subject to the standard requirements and procedures for admission onto that programme.

RPL applications for advanced entry into an unrelated CIT degree programme at a stage *no higher* than that last completed by the exit award graduate may be considered by exception. However, the RPL mechanism must not be used to circumvent the normal transfer and progression regulations of CIT.

Where in doubt, Heads of Department should refer the final decision on the re-admission of exiting learners within the period of limitation on to the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

a) Early Re-Entry

In some exceptional cases, the grounds which caused a learner to apply for, and a Head of Department to approve, the making of an exit award may unexpectedly cease to exist early on in the normal 12-month exclusion period, in such a way as to suggest that an immediate return of the learner to the relevant stage of the target programme will be the most reasonable course of action under the circumstances.

Where an exiting learner can show that unexpected changes in her/his circumstances reasonably suggest that the normal exclusion period should be set aside, and with the stated support of the Head of Department, s/he may make a written application for early re-entry to the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

On consultation with the Head of Department and any other persons as s/he sees fit, the Registrar at her or his sole discretion will decide whether to grant or deny immediate re-entry.

Should the exit award have already been made to the learner when permission for early re-entry is given, the learner must return the exit award parchment to the CIT Examinations Office and formally relinquish the exit award before s/he can be allowed to re-register.

The rules and procedures for early re-entry into the original programme shall also apply to applications of exiting leaners for immediate progression to a more advanced stage of another CIT programme.

5. *Availability of Embedded Awards to Specified Non-Exiting Learner Cohorts*

In addition, non-exiting learners on the programmes set out in Appendix 1 of this policy who meet certain criteria may apply to obtain certain specified embedded awards normally reserved for exiting learners.

As a general principle, this concerns learners enrolled on an advanced programme stage who, by dint of official government policy or the formal requirements of a statutory national authority, are required to prove a certain level of educational attainment through submission of a parchment in order to avail of grants or other significant professional or economic benefits directly related to their present or future employment in the chosen professional field.

A specific application process for qualifying learners will be put in place by the Academic Administration & Student Affairs Office for each embedded award listed in Appendix 1. This process will entail confirmation by the Head of Department that the applicant has proven to the Head of Department's satisfaction that application for the award is demonstrably tied to the purpose specified.

With the approval of Academic Council, Appendix 1 may be updated from time to time with additional embedded awards which fall in this category without prejudicing the remainder of this policy.

6. *Validation and Review of Exit Awards*

Exit awards must be validated and reviewed/revalidated together with the target award with which they are associated.

All validated exit award(s) available to learners enrolled on a particular programme need to be specified as part of the formal public programme information provided by the host department.

a) Embedded Exit Awards

For the validation of embedded exit awards, a presentation of the educational aim and programme outcomes, a mapping of module and programme learning outcomes, and a statement of professional value will normally suffice, if submitted as part of the programme documentation for the proposed target award. The documentation for the target award should clearly state which programme stage(s) comprise the programme schedule for which exit award(s).

In addition, programme documentation submitted for revalidations should include information on the number of learners who have exited since the last programme review and, where possible, on their reasons for leaving. Any changes proposed to the educational aim, programme outcomes, delivery of the outcomes and/or professional value of the embedded exit award(s) should also be notified.

b) Non-embedded Exit Awards

In some cases, it may be possible to validate a suitable existing Higher Certificate, Ordinary Bachelor or Postgraduate Diploma as a non-embedded exit award for a particular cognate degree or degrees.

- An example might be the use of a generic non-denominated Higher Certificate as an exit award for a series of cognate, but more specialised Bachelor degrees.

To enable validation, the host department of the target award will need to demonstrate that the programme outcomes of the intended exit award are met sufficiently well by the learning outcomes of the relevant target award stage(s) to merit conferral of the related award on exiting students.

For purposes of revalidation, some information on the demand for the non-embedded exit award in the period since the last review should be supplied, as well as information on any proposed changes to the programme outcomes, specification or professional value, as per embedded exit awards.

7. *Programmes without Exit Awards*

At times, specific external or internal constraints (e.g. professional accreditation requirements, curriculum design limitations) may advocate against the embedding of a particular major exit award or awards in a degree programme.

Where this is the case, the host department should make a case for not embedding a major exit award or awards prior to validation of a proposed programme, and should review this case subsequently for each programme review.

For pre-existing degree programmes, the case for not embedding one or more exit awards should be made at the programmatic review following the first approval of this policy by Academic Council.

B. Making an Application

1. Fees

Appropriate administration fees will apply to exit award applications and to applications for the embedded awards specified in Appendix 1.

2. Application Procedure

i. To apply for an available exit award, a learner completes all relevant sections of the CIT Exit Award Application form and formally submits the form with the relevant information to the Head of Department within the applicable deadline.

ii. On receipt of the application, the Head of Department reviews the learner's stage results as signed off on by the relevant PAB. The Head of Department may also ask to meet the learner if s/he deems this necessary.

   Once the Head of Department is satisfied that s/he has obtained sufficient information to confirm eligibility of the learner for the exit award, s/he completes the departmental sections of the application form.

   Specifically, the Head of Department confirms

   - that to the best of her/his knowledge, the grounds upon which the exit award application is based are valid, significant and exceptional;

   - that the review of the relevant broadsheet(s) has confirmed that the learner academically deserves the requested exit award; and

   - that consequently the Head of Department deems the learner eligible to receive the requested exit award.

   In addition, the Head of Department enters the appropriate classification of the exit award, based on the classification of the stage results previously determined by the relevant PAB and approved by Academic Council.

   The Head of Department signs the completed Exit Award Application form and forwards this to the CIT Examinations Office, retaining a copy (as well as any supporting materials where appropriate) for the departmental record.

iii. On receipt of confirmation from the department that the Head of Department has approved the exit award application, the exiting learner contacts the CIT Fees Office to pay the applicable fee.

iv. The CIT Examinations Office conducts the necessary checks to ascertain that the applicant deserves the award and that, having paid the relevant fee and discharged all other outstanding financial obligations, s/he is in good standing with the Institute.

   Following a positive outcome of these checks, the Examinations Office notifies the Admissions Office to effect formal termination of her/his enrolment on the original programme, and releases the parchment in accordance with the applicant's chosen conferral procedure (see C. below).

C. Conferring of Exit Awards

On the exit award application, the applicant indicates whether s/he wishes to be conferred with the exit award, or whether s/he wishes to formally forego the conferring ceremony in order for the award to be conferred administratively.

i.   The conferring of an exit award, if requested by the applicant, takes place at the next available conferring date of Cork Institute of Technology, or the next date thereafter at which the applicant can feasibly be accommodated at a CIT conferring ceremony, at the sole discretion of the Institute.

ii. Should an applicant elect to forego the conferring ceremony, a parchment is generated by the CIT Examinations Office and is forwarded to the graduate by secure means.

Appendix 1: Listing of Embedded Awards Available Under Specified Conditions (12.A.5)

				Update: 13 December 2018
CIT Programme / Target Award	**Conditionally Available Embedded Award**	**Parchment Required By**	**Specified Purpose / Scheme**	**Additional Comments**
C_BAGRI_7 BSc in Agriculture	Higher Certificate in Science in Agriculture	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Farm Grants under the Young Farmers Scheme and other comparable schemes as they arise	