Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

03 May 2024

Version: 2.0

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1. Purpose

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a critical component to widening participation to higher education and in supporting lifelong learning. It is intended that RPL would enhance the accessibility to programmes for people who already possess some of the knowledge, skills, and competencies, which a programme seeks to develop.

The purpose of this policy is to
- Acknowledge the importance of RPL at MTU.
- Present the overarching principles which apply to the implementation of RPL within the University.

2. Scope

RPL applies to all programmes, at all levels and in all disciplines of study leading to an MTU award. However:
a) Where an award is directly related to a profession where successful professional practice is predicated on professional registration and, in this context, the academic programme needs to achieve recognition, accreditation, or approval from a relevant professional body or statutory regulator, derogations may apply at programme level. Such derogations must be approved by the Academic Council, listed in Appendix 2 to this policy, and must be communicated clearly to students and applicants.
b) In the case of joint or collaborative programmes, RPL is subject to agreement between the collaborating parties.

3. Definitions

It is necessary to be familiar with the relevant definitions in order to interpret this document. Additional definitions are outlined in Appendix 1.

Term/Acronym	Definition
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	RPL is the recognition of a learner's prior achievement of learning outcomes, whether by means of formal, non-formal, or informal learning. Academic credit can be awarded only for achievement of learning outcomes, not for experience per se.
Formal Learning	Formal learning is learning which takes place through programmes of study or training for which credit (ECTS) has been awarded through a higher educational institution or other education/training provider and which articulates with a National Framework of Qualifications. Under the principle that such credit should only be awarded once, such prior learning is accorded recognition rather than accreditation.
Informal Learning or Experiential learning	Informal Learning or Experiential Learning is learning which takes place through life and work experience. Often, it is learning that is unintentional and the learner may not recognise at the time of the

	experience that it has contributed to their knowledge, skills, or competence.
Non-formal learning	Non-formal learning is 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.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsible Office/Person(s)	Role
Academic Council	The Council oversees the final approval of policy in the University.
Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar	The executive oversight of this policy lies with Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar.
Regulations, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee of the Academic Council	Has responsibility for the review of this policy and any changes or amendments to same.

5. Policy

5.1 Principles

This section outlines the principles underpinning this policy.

5.1.1 General

- The learner is central to the process of RPL.
- RPL is governed by the quality assurance standards of the university.
- RPL gives value to all learning in the context of the destination award, irrespective of where, when, or how that learning has been attained.
  - RPL applies to all modules, on programmes, at all levels and in all disciplines of study leading to an MTU award. However:
    - Where an award is directly related to a profession where successful professional practice is predicated on professional registration and, in this context, the academic programme needs to achieve recognition, accreditation, or approval from a relevant statutory regulator, derogations may apply at programme level. Such derogations must be approved by the Academic Council, listed in Appendix 2 to this policy, and must be communicated clearly to current students and applicants or prospective applicants to those programmes.
    - In the case of joint or collaborative programmes, RPL is subject to agreement between the collaborating parties.

- RPL for supervised research will be considered.
- RPL is conducted in a manner that is fair and consistent for the learner.
- Participation in RPL is voluntary for the individual learner concerned.

5.1.2 Access, Transfer and Progression
- RPL will provide opportunities for Access Transfer and Progression into programmes within MTU and for the achievement of an award. It is MTU policy to issue classified awards wherever possible and to ensure that the applicant is clear on the implications of an unclassified award if that is the result of an RPL process.
- RPL is part of an inclusive approach to learning at MTU.
- Exemptions will be given for complete modules only.

5.1.3 Quality Assurance
- RPL policy and procedure is governed by the quality assurance processes of the University and maintains the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.
- RPL procedures must establish an applicant's capacity to succeed on a programme if offered initial entry, advanced entry, progression, or module exemptions.
- Processes and practices for RPL are clearly documented.
- Systems for the award of credits for prior certified learning as distinguished from prior experiential learning at award and non-award stages of a programme are clearly defined.
- Appeals are processed under the existing Quality Assurance procedures of MTU.

5.1.4 Communication/documentation
- The resources in place to support RPL will be communicated to all stakeholders.
- The promotion and facilitation of the RPL process is the responsibility of everyone in the university.
- Policy, procedures, and practices of RPL are available to all potential learners and assessors.

5.1.5 Assessment
- The assessment of prior learning is an academic activity performed by academic staff.
- Assessment criteria are based on the learning outcomes as stated in the approved programme documentation.
- Evidence of the attainment of learning outcomes is assessed by applying the same quality assurance standards which the university applies to all its programmes.
- Assessment criteria are made explicit to applicants and applied consistently and fairly.
- Assessment and verification mechanisms for RPL are appropriate and fit for purpose.
- The assessment of prior learning will consider the validity, currency, relevance, sufficiency, and authenticity of the learning.
- Assessment will be carried out within a reasonable time frame.
- Outcomes will be presented for decision in line with MTU Quality Assurance procedures.

5.1.6 Support
- Appropriate guidance and support are offered to applicants and academic staff.
- Training for Staff.

5.1.7 Engagement with industry and other stakeholders
- RPL along with work-based learning is a key part of MTU's relationship with employers and external stakeholders and supports all forms of innovative course development as well as cohort and individual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pathways.

5.2   Policy Details

Subject to Sections 2 and 5.1.1 of this policy, the facility to apply through the RPL process is available to every learner of MTU.

RPL can be used to
- i)   Gain entry to a programme
- ii)   Gain advanced entry admission to academic programmes
- iii)   Gain exemptions or credit against a module or a number of modules of a programme
- iv)   Gain a full academic award

RPL encompasses formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning.

5.2.1 Gain entry to a programme

RPL can be used for non-standard entry onto a programme.

5.2.2   RPL for Advanced entry

RPL may be used to gain entry to an advanced stage of a programme following a process of evaluation where the learner is adjudged to have learning equivalent to the overall learning of the previous stage(s). If learning deficits are identified in relation to the overall learning of the previous stage(s), the learner will be required to address those deficits prior to entry to the programme. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible for the learner to address the deficits as part of their programme of study.

For each learner, the outcomes of this process will be submitted to the Registrar's Office together with supporting documentation and the learning deficits, if any, that must be addressed clearly identified.

5.2.3   RPL at non-award stages

For prior certified (formal) learning, recognition may be awarded in the form of exemptions. In the case of prior non-formal and informal learning, the learning will be assessed, and credits granted.

Recognition and awarding of credit are for complete modules, where the learning presented and verified is assessed as meeting satisfactorily the learning outcomes of the module in question.

5.2.4   RPL at award stage

A learner completing modules contributing to the award stage of a programme must have at least 60 credits of new learning which has not previously contributed to a major award. All

modules should be graded, otherwise the award will be unclassified, and the learner informed of the implications.

5.3   Appeal

The student has the right to appeal the outcome of the assessment and may initiate an appeal under MTU's Assessment Appeal process.

6. Compliance

Compliance with this policy extends to MTU staff, and providers of services on behalf of the university, partners, stakeholders, registered MTU students, applicants to MTU programmes, and alumni.

Document Control

A. Document Details

Title:	Policy Governing Recognition of Prior Learning
Owner(s):	MTU VP Academic Affairs and Registrar
Author(s):	RPL Working Group Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement I&D Committee
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Note: If the 'Status' of this document reads 'Draft', it has not been finalised and should not be relied upon. An existing approved policy is deemed relevant until such time as an updated policy has been approved by the relevant approval authority and becomes the new binding policy.

B. Revision History

Version Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes tracked?	Proposed Revision Date
1.0	25/03/2022	Approved by Academic Council		
1.1	May 2024	Include provision for derogations at programme level and approval authority for same. Minor editorial changes. Update Section C to take account of new/updated policies and relevant documents.	Yes	03/05/24
2.0	03/05/24	Approved by Academic Council	Yes	03/05/27

C. Relevant/Related Existing Internal/External Documents

QQI Assessment and Standards 2013

Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training NQAI 2005

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

A Pilot Framework for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education (National RPL in Higher Education Project)

MTU Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards) Version 1.0 (2023)

MTU Admissions Policy V3.0 16 June 2023

Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Practise

Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Study

CIT Academic Policy Governing Assessment Appeals and Errors and Omissions relating to Assessment, 2017

IT Tralee policies
A14.2 Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning 2012
A14.3 Admissions Policy 2019

Note: Any existing approved documents that require referencing must be listed above.

D. Consultation History

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

Academic Management, Academic Staff, Regulations, QAE I&D committee

E. Approvals

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

Name	Date	Details of Approval Required
Academic Council	25th March 2022	Version 1.0
Academic Council	3rd May 2024	Version 2.0

F. Responsible for Communication and Implementation

Manager/Functional Area responsible for communication and implementation:

Title	Functional Area	Date Implemented
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar	Academic Affairs	3rd May 2024

Appendix 1 Other Definitions

Term/Acronym	Definition
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ECTS allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another. ECTS credits express the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload.
Redeemed credit	Prior formal learning which has contributed to the achievement of a major award on the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ) or equivalent framework which articulates to the NFQ.
Unredeemed credit	Prior formal learning which has not resulted in the achievement of a major award on the NFQ or equivalent framework with articulates to the NFQ and is thus treated as new learning.
Classified award	At the end of a programme of study, based on examination and assessment results, an Award Classification will be made based on Grade Point Average (GPA) thresholds.
Unclassified award	At the end of a programme of study, if examination and/or assessment results are not available to contribute to the calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA) an unclassified award will be given.
Major Award	The principal class of awards made at a level of the National Framework of Qualifications.
Minor Award	**Minor awards** provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes, but not the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award. This recognition will have relevance in its own right. **Special-purpose awards** are made for specific, relatively narrow purposes. **Supplemental award**s are for learning which is additional to a previous major or special purpose award. They could, for example, relate to updating and refreshing knowledge or skills, or to continuing professional development.
Module	A module is a self-contained subject and is usually assessed independently of other modules.
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications is a system of 10 levels used to describe the qualifications in the Irish Education and training system. Higher Education operates at Level 6 (Higher Certificate) to Level 10 (Doctoral level).
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland is the state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity, and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education system.
Learning outcomes	Statement of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning.

Appendix 2 Derogation

A derogation from the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy has been approved in respect of the following programme:

Department of Applied Social Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Social Care Work