



MTU

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

25 March 2022

Version: 1.0

www.mtu.ie/policies

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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 programmes seeks to develop.

The purpose of this policy is to

- Acknowledge the importance of RPL at MTU.
- To 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. 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 Vice President Academic Affairs | The executive oversight of this policy lies with Office of the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Registrars. |
| Regulations, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Integration & Development Committee | 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.

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.
- 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.

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.

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.

- System 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.

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.

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.

Support

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

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

The facility to apply through the RPL process is available to everybody.

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 stages

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 using the Examinations Appeal process set out by MTU.

6. Compliance

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

Document Control

A. Document Details

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Title: | Policy Governing Recognition of Prior Learning |
| Owner(s): | MTU VPs Academic Affairs and Registrars |
| Author(s): | RPL Working Group Regulations, Quality Assurance & Enhancement I&D Committee |
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| Review Date: | 25 th March 2025 |
| Data Classification: | <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential <input type="checkbox"/> Strictly Confidential <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted/Internal Use |

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 |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | |

C. Relevant/Related Existing Internal/External Documents

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| QAI 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 CIT Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards) Version 6.0 (1st September 2018) MTU Admissions Policy 17th December 2021 CIT Student Fitness to Practise Policy, Version 1.4 (July 2017) CIT Student Fitness to Study Policy, July 2017 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 |
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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:

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| 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 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Regulations, QAE I&D Committee | 11 th February 2022 | |
| Academic Council | 25 th March 2022 | Version 1 |

F. Responsible for Communication and Implementation

Manager/Functional Area responsible for communication and implementation:

| Title | Functional Area | Date Implemented |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| VPs Academic Affairs and Registrars | Academic Affairs | 25 th March 2022 |

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 | <p>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.</p> <p>Special-purpose awards are made for specific, relatively narrow purposes.</p> <p>Supplemental awards 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.</p> |
| 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. |