

Appendix XIII. Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning



Policy & Procedure Title:

Policy and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Effective Date	1 st December 2018	Version	4.0
Approved By	Academic Council Governing Body	Date Approved	26 th November 2018 29 th November 2018

Form(s)	Responsibilities/ Owner
Application Form for Advanced Entry – National and EU Learners	Head of Department/Faculty/Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar
Application Form for Advanced Entry – International Learners (Non EU)	
Application Form for Module(s) Exemption	
Superseded or Obsolete Procedures	
Version 03 – October 2016 - Policy reviewed to reflect requirements under Equality Diversity & Inclusion and GDPR	
Version 02 – June 2014 - Policy review to update legislation reference and reflect changes to title of Faculty	
Version 01 – Sept 2010 - Policy Review to reflect the prior learning of mature learners throughout the Institute, for example, in the Centre for Lifelong Learning in Collaborative Partnerships	

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides significant benefits, for example, increased capacity flexibility for learners, employers and academic institutions, as outlined in the report issued by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) April 2011.

RPL is adopted by SETU Carlow as a mechanism of entry onto a programme through advanced entry on both undergraduate and post-graduate programmes or for module exemption.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

SETU Carlow recognises prior learning, whether it is:

Formal certified learning for which credit has been achieved through a higher education institution or other education/training provider which articulates with the NFQ

or

Uncertified Learning including experiential learning gained from relevant life and work experience.

This policy supersedes all existing policies and procedures for advanced entry or module exemption requests.

3. DEFINITIONS

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - RPL is a process for giving applicants recognition for the formal and relevant informal/uncertified learning achieved prior to their applying for a programme with SETU Carlow.

Certified Learning – is learning that has been certified by an awarding body in the form of a major award (e.g. a higher certificate or bachelor's degree) or is included as part of such an award. Certified learning may also be certified by an awarding body in the form of a minor, special-purpose or supplemental award or for a period of study where the relevant credit has not already been used to meet the credit requirements for a major award. Certified learning may also be defined as awards provided by professional bodies.

Uncertified learning – such learning encompasses the skills and knowledge acquired through work experience and work training but also relevant study which has never been formally certified through the NFQ.

Currency of Certified Learning – In general, certified awards proposed for advanced entry or for module exemption must have been awarded within the previous five years. Awards longer than that period will require an RPL portfolio to support the submission.

4. IMPLEMENTING POLICY

RPL may be used to gain entry on to an advanced stage of a programme of study or to grant exemptions to one or more modules of a programme where the learner is deemed to have

learning equivalent to the overall learning of the previous stage(s) of the programme or of the module(s) for which exemption is being sought.

Depending on the structure of a programme, the mapping exercise carried out as part of the application review may differ between programmes. Issues that shall be considered are duration of programme, academic level of modules within a programme, stage learning outcomes.

Applications must be made, as appropriate, through
Submission of Certified Learning transcripts; or
Submission for consideration of uncertified learning; or
Combination of the above.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all necessary documentation is provided. Failure to provide all supporting documentation may result in the application being unsuccessful.

PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION OF POLICY

The relevant forms provided as Appendices B, C, D & E will be completed by applicants and shall be duly signed off by assigned authorities and recorded on the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar's Register.

5.1 RPL for exemptions from a module(s) (Appendix D). RPL may be used to gain an exemption(s) from a module(s) on a programme of study for which the learner is registered. Such exemptions may be granted where the learner is deemed to have already attained the learning outcomes of the relevant module(s).

Note: Applicants shall be first registered on the relevant programme of study in order to apply for an exemption from a module(s).

Advanced Entry to a Programme (Appendix B or C). This is defined as a learner seeking full waiver from one or more stages of a programme and is referenced to current QQI Conventions and SETU Carlow Academic Standards and Assessment Regulations (ASAR) policy.

Certified Learning which has contributed to a Major Award within the same generic area of study

If prior certified learning has already contributed to a major award at an award stage, at the same NFQ level within the same generic area of study on which the applicant is enrolled, then it is not considered 'new' learning and the learner cannot receive new credits for it. This is based on the principle that such credit can only be awarded once.

In cases of prior certified learning, where that learning has already contributed to a major award (not including a minor or special purpose award), recognition may be awarded in the form of an exemption from a module.

If an exemption is granted in an award year, an unclassified award may be made (*ASAR Part 3 Sectoral Convention 3 Determination of Award Classification and Appendix 5*). The learner

is advised of this during the application process and shall be given the opportunity to withdraw the application for exemption before it is granted.

5.2.2 Certified Learning which has not contributed to a Major Award within the same generic area of study

If the prior certified learning did not contribute to a major award or is in a substantially different area of study than the previous major award received by the applicant, then credits may be awarded for it.

If a learner claims an exemption from a module(s) and the grade from that module(s) could otherwise contribute to the award classification, SETU Carlow, if satisfied that an exemption could be granted and that credits could be awarded, and if satisfied that there is equivalency of academic standards, may use the previously certified mark obtained by the learner in respect of the module(s), in calculating the learner's overall award classification.

If it is not possible to use the previously attained certified mark at an award stage then the granting of an exemption may result in an unclassified award being made. (*ASAR Part 3 Sectoral Convention 3 Determination of Award Classification and Appendix 5*). The learner is advised of this during the application process and shall be given the opportunity to withdraw the application for exemption before it is granted.

5.2.3 Uncertified learning

An uncertified learning submission will be required where:

- A candidate is seeking either exemption / waiver from a full stage or is seeking a module(s) exemption but does not have the formal academic qualifications to allow the certified learning exemption process be applied

OR

- Where the previous certified learning is deemed to be outside the five year valid time limit since graduation.

This process allows an applicant's relevant life / work experience to be considered and evaluated as to whether these meet the learning outcomes expected for eligibility to a programme. The aim of this evaluation is to ensure that all applicants are treated equally but also to ensure that the criteria used to assess the evaluation are at a level that ensures applicants are meeting the minimum entry standards.

Original evidence in support of the candidate's claims must be provided within the candidate's application. The application shall be prepared in accordance with Appendix E. The evaluation will not be considered without such original evidence.

The evaluation will be carried out through a review of the application and / or an interview with the Head of Department / Faculty / Campus or their nominee, where necessary.

For entry purposes onto a programme, the evaluation will in general be graded as Pass/Fail. Where places onto a programme are limited and a number of applicants are seeking entry via

the uncertified learning application process then the evaluation may be carried out through a grading system approved by the Head of Department / Faculty / Campus.

If it is not possible to award a grade for a module exemption granted on the basis of uncertified learning at award stage then an unclassified award may be made. (*ASAR Part 3 Sectoral Convention 3 Determination of Award Classification and Appendix 5*). The learner is advised of this during the application process and shall be given the opportunity to withdraw the application for exemption before it is granted.

REVIEW PROCESS

The policy allows for the applicant to resubmit on presentation of additional information.

Applicants may seek a review of an RPL decision (through the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar's Office) within ten working days of receipt of the written decision. Such a review will incur an administrative fee.

Only one review will be allowed for any RPL application.

Appendices

A: Flow charts: A1. Flow charts for Module Exemption

A2. Flow charts for International

A3. Flow charts for Advanced Entry

B: Application Form for Advanced Entry – National learners

C: Application Form for Advanced Entry – International learners

D: Application Form for Module(s) Exemption

E: Uncertified learning Application