

<b>Document Name and Version</b>	<b>1.4 Recognition of Prior Learning Policy</b>
<b>Policy Number</b>	1.4
<b>Policies that Interact with Policy 1.4</b>	<p>Policy 1.3 Access, Transfer and Progression</p> <p>Policy 5.7 Examination Results: Review, Recheck and Appeal.</p> <p>Policy 2.10 <a href="#">Terms of Reference Academic Council Boards, Subcommittees &amp; Panels</a></p> <p>Policy 2.11 Procedures for Appeals and Hearings</p> <p>5.7 Examination Results: Review, Recheck and Appeal</p>
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<b>Revisions</b>	

## **1. Preamble.**

1.1. Recognition of Prior Learning Policy [RPL] is intended for applicants who may not have the specified direct entry requirements gained through structured formal accredited education but who have learned from their involvement in training, education, employment, and work-based learning.

1.2. This process may also be used by applicants who are seeking exemptions from modules, or advanced entry to an accredited programme of learning within IICP College.

1.3. This policy addresses QQI and other relevant guidelines, in particular:

**1.3.1.** *QQI Policy Restatement: Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training* (NQAI 2003, restated 2015).

1.3.2. *QQI Assessment and Standards*, Revised 2013.

1.3.3. *NQAI Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish higher education and training* (NQAI 2006).

## **2. Purpose.**

2.1. These procedures describe how applicants can apply to the College for recognition of prior learning.

## **3. Scope.**

3.1. This policy applies to applications to IICP College core programmes for recognition of prior learning for the purposes of entry, subject exemption and advanced entry.

## **4. Responsibility**

4.1. The Registrar's Office is responsible for ensuring that information relating to programmes and arrangements for RPL are available to prospective learners.

4.2. The Programme Board is responsible for deciding on RPL applications. It delegates responsibility to an RPL Assessment Committee to determine an applicant's eligibility to access a programme, or gain exemptions based on their prior learning.

4.3. The Registrar's Office is responsible for notifying applicants of the outcome and for making the appropriate adjustments to student records.

4.4. The applicant is responsible for providing evidence of learning (i.e. attested learning) in accordance with these procedures.

## **5. Policy.**

5.1. IICP College has a formal process in place with regard to RPL. RPL recognises that knowledge and skills can be acquired from a range of learning experiences, including certified and uncertified learning.

5.2. RPL may be used for application for entry, subject exemptions and advanced entry. RPL is not available towards any part of the award year of a programme, or a programme whose duration is one year or less.

5.3. It is the responsibility of applicants seeking RPL to complete the documentation sufficiently in advance of the relevant deadline, and to supply all evidence in support of their application. Applicants are fully informed of the application process, their responsibilities as applicant, the stages within it, and the nature and scope of the evidence that is considered appropriate to support a claim for RPL.

5.4. Prior learning includes:

5.4.1. Formal learning: learning that takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognised awards and qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications [NFQ].

5.4.2. Non-Formal learning: Learning that is outcome-focused and planned. It occurs outside of the formal education settings. An example would be

professional training which cannot be placed on the NFQ but may be certified by a training body or professional body.

5.4.3. Informal learning: learning that is achieved in everyday life. This is sometimes called experiential learning and will, in most cases, be unplanned and un-structured.

5.5. Learning may be:

5.5.1. Certified: The applicant's level of learning will have been assessed and he/she will have received certification for achievement on the NFQ.

5.5.2. Uncertified: learning may have taken place within a formal institution, but will most likely have occurred in a non-formal or an informal setting. Regardless of the setting, the learning achieved will not have been formally certified on the NFQ, but may receive institutional certification.

5.6. RPL may be used to:

5.6.1. Gain admission to a programme of study where the standard entry requirements are not met;

5.6.2. Gain exemptions on a programme of study;

5.6.3. Gain advanced entry to a programme of study;

5.6.4. Transfer from one programme of study to another.

5.7. Possibilities and limitations of RPL in entry, exemptions and advanced entry. Before applying for RPL, applications should make themselves aware of what they may and may not be able to achieve through an RPL application.

5.7.1. Applications for Indirect Entry: Where an applicant can demonstrate that they have achieved the required academic entry requirements for a programme through a combination of certified and uncertified learning then they may be accepted onto the programme. It should be noted that in making such a decision, the following will be taken into account:

- The availability of places on the programme;
- Demonstrated achievement of all entry requirements assessed through desk-based review and interview.

5.7.2. Applications for Exemptions: Where an applicant can demonstrate that they have achieved the required learning of a module through any combination of certified and uncertified learning then they may be granted an exemption. When granted, an exemption means that a learner does not attend classes or submit assessments for a module.

5.7.2.1. An exemption from a module will only be granted when a student can demonstrate that they have acquired learning for all the skills and knowledge described by the learning outcomes of the module.

5.7.2.2. Exemptions will only be permitted where satisfaction of module requirements through exemption does not negatively impact on the overall programme learning experience for the learner or the cohesion of the programme.

5.7.2.3. The minimum claim allowable is equivalent to a whole module.

5.7.3. Applications for Advanced Entry:

5.7.3.1. Where an applicant can demonstrate that they have achieved the required learning of a stage of a programme through a combination of certified and uncertified learning then they may be granted an exemption from a programme stage.

5.7.3.2. The same limitations apply to Advanced Entry as apply to module exemptions.

5.8. Policy relating to assessment of RPL submissions. RPL submissions are considered on a case-by-case basis. The assessment process for Prior Learning is consistent with the assessment of learners as a part of the programme. Applicants are assessed in relation to the knowledge, skills and competencies required of learners to the programme. Only achievement that fits with that required by the programme can be assessed through the College RPL procedure.

5.8.1. The Assessment process will consider developments (e.g. professional, theoretical) since the learning was achieved and determine whether this would impact on the knowledge, skills and competence required on graduation.

5.8.2. Learning outcomes achieved on the basis of prior learning must be considered at the appropriate level corresponding to the NFQ.

5.8.3. Credit will not be awarded and may not be counted twice for the same achievement. Any exemptions allocated on the basis of RPL will be clearly indicated in the relevant sections (ECTS credits) of the Diploma Supplement issued to learners on completion of their programme of study. This will ensure ease of recognition for other academic providers and/or employers.

5.8.4. Applicants should note that programme-specific regulations might apply both in relation to entry and exemptions, in particular where professional body requirements apply. Consequently, each programme has explicit RPL criteria, which is made available to applicants as part of the RPL procedure.

5.8.5. Initially applicants are encouraged to discuss the possibility of an RPL application with a designated member of IICP College. This helps to ensure that applicants understand the application process.

5.9. RPL Fees: In cases of Recognition of uncertified learning, or application for an exemption, there is a charge for the assessment of prior learning in order to cover the costs of conducting an assessment. The usual fee is 120 Euro fee for Indirect Entry applications and 75 Euro per module for exemptions. The fees charged may vary particularly where additional resources are required to be able to comprehensively and fairly assess the application. Any additional amount will be specified in advance of the assessment taking place and cannot be construed in any way as payment for exemption or admission to a programme.

5.10. Decision-making. RPL decisions come under the remit of the Programme Board for the programme against which the application is being made. The Programme Board delegates its authority for such decisions to an RPL Assessment Committee (see section 7.6.1). This committee makes its decision on the basis of its academic judgment using the information and evidence provided by the applicant (as per QQI Assessment and Standards, 2013).

5.11. Appeal. An applicant wishing to appeal against the decision of the RPL Assessment Committee may do so by invoking *Policy 5.7 Examination Results: Review, Recheck*

*and Appeal*. It should be noted that, since RPL does not usually result in a mark, the recheck procedure will usually not apply.

5.12. No person with any prior involvement in the case shall be involved in subsequent decision-making or Formal Hearings. Membership and procedures of any decision-making body are governed by IICP College's Policy and Procedures for Hearings and Appeals.

## **6. Procedure for Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience.**

6.1. There are different processes for RPL depending on the purpose for which it is used.

While an RPL application always requires the applicant to provide evidence of appropriate past learning, whether that is certificated or uncertified learning, the types of evidence might differ. Applicants are required to submit a completed application form and relevant evidence. It should be noted that these forms are programme specific and change regularly. Applicants are required to evidence their application through, for example, the submission of certificates and /or transcripts, or details of programmes completed as appropriate. Learners should ensure that they obtain the relevant, most up-to-date application forms from the Registrar's office ([registryadmin@iicp.ie](mailto:registryadmin@iicp.ie)).

6.2. Applicants may also be required to carry out assignments or self-assessment exercise, to prepare a file or 'portfolio' of appropriate evidence of learning, an interview, and/ or a demonstration or assessment task.

### **6.3. Application for Indirect Entry**

6.3.1. An applicant who does not have the direct entry requirements may apply through RPL to demonstrate this achievement through a combination of certificated and uncertified learning.

6.3.2. Applicants should indicate their intention to apply for RPL at the time of application.

6.3.3. Applicants for entry through RPL should submit all relevant documentation with their application.

6.3.4. If an applicant wishes to receive support with their application, they may discuss their circumstances with an appropriate member of the College prior to submitting their application. Applicants should note that, as with all assessments, the learner is responsible for demonstrating achievement of the learning outcomes.

6.3.5. It should be noted that RPL only assesses achievement of required competencies for entry. Programmes may have other criteria for entry, such as English Language requirements or professional body status. Therefore successful applicants will need to engage with the Course Application process as well as the RPL process.

#### 6.4. Application for Exemptions / Advanced entry

6.4.1. An applicant may apply for an exemption from a module where they believe that they can evidence equivalent learning. In order to do so the applicant should indicate their intention to apply at the time of application.

6.4.2. This achievement can be demonstrated using certified learning, prior uncertified learning, or through a combination of certified and uncertified learning.

6.4.3. Application for a module exemption through RPL is made on the programme-specific required form, available from the Registrar's office at [RegistryAdmin@iicp.ie](mailto:RegistryAdmin@iicp.ie).

6.4.4. An applicant will be required to support their application with relevant documentation. The completed application form and evidence should be submitted to the Registry Office ([RegistryAdmin@iicp.ie](mailto:RegistryAdmin@iicp.ie)).

6.4.5. Applicants must meet all the programme entry requirements.

6.4.6. Module exemption applicants can be quite complex, particularly where uncertified learning is used. Consequently applicants for an exemption should discuss their application with a designated faculty member prior to submitting their application.



## 6.5. Applications: Documents

6.5.1. The following guidance on evidence is provided. It should be noted that this is guidance only and further evidence may be useful or required.

6.5.2. Indicative documentation: Certified Learning:

- Letter of application for RPL indicating outcome applied for;
- Proof of qualification;
- Official transcript of results for each year of previous studies;
- Syllabus, including learning outcomes, of prior learning programmes;
- Assessment task;
- Fees.

6.5.3. Indicative documentation: Uncertified Learning:

- Letter of application for RPL indicating outcome applied for;
- Letter of intent from the applicant;
- Full outline of the relevant experience with evidence of learning achieved. This may include assessment carried out as part of professional programmes, testimonials, peer reviewed publications;
- Fees.

## 6.6. Assessing Prior Learning:

6.6.1. The Programme Board delegates its authority for such decisions to the RPL Assessment Committee established for this purpose, consisting of senior academics within the College, at least one of whom should be members of the Programme Board. This RPL Assessment Committee makes its decision on the basis of its academic judgment, informed by QQI policy, using the information and evidence provided by the applicant.

6.6.2. Weight of evidence:

6.6.2.1. *Relevance*: Assessors will consider whether the evidence presented is directly relevant to the programme.

6.6.2.2. *Equivalency*: Assessors will consider whether evidence presented demonstrates that the standards have been met.

6.6.2.3. *Flexibility of learning*: Learning must be transferable to contexts other than that of the learning environment within which it was acquired. In particular the applicant must have achieved an appropriate balance between theoretical and academic learning and practical skills and competence.

6.6.2.4. *Sufficiency: Level, Breath and Volume*. Learning outcomes must be achieved at the appropriate academic level and without any significant gaps. Breath of Learning and volume of Learning Outcomes must be comparable to the appropriate level on the National Framework of Qualifications.

6.6.2.5. *Currency of learning*. Learning must be applicable to current theoretical and practice contexts. Evidence is current within the last 5 years. Evidence provided may be older but if so, must still show that it is current to the skill, knowledge and competency requirements of the award/ stage / unit in question.

6.6.2.6. *Authenticity*: Evidence is endorsed by educational institution where appropriate and /or by appropriate person such as an employer.

6.7. Assessment Results: Result of the application depends on its original purpose.

6.7.1.1. Indirect Entry: The assessment of prior learning for entry may result in a recognition of attainment of academic entry requirements. This may be used for the purposes of non-standard entry.

6.7.1.2. Exemptions:

6.7.1.2.1. Exemptions are not available towards any part of the award year of a programme, or a programme whose duration is one year or less.

6.7.1.2.2. Prior accredited learning: Where this prior learning is certified by an awarding body in the form of a major award or is included as part of such an award, an exemption may be granted for a module if the learner demonstrates the minimum intended module learning outcomes. For learners who demonstrate the required learning, the result are returned as Exemption Granted. The learner is not granted

any ECTS credit because credit has already been granted in the prior qualification.

6.7.1.2.3. Prior unaccredited learning: An applicant may be exempted from participating in a module if they can demonstrate that they have already attained the minimum intended module learning outcomes through prior unaccredited learning. The applicant needs to evidence that the prior learning is of a sufficiently good match to the minimum intended module learning outcomes to justify exemption from the module in the context of the overall programme. For uncertified learning, applicants may be assessed using the regular module assessment instruments and/or by an alternative assessment arrangement. Learners who are assessed to have demonstrated the required learning are granted the available credit for the module and are exempt from the module.

6.7.1.3. Level of Attainment: Where the attainment identified does not directly align with the purpose of the application (e.g. exemption; advanced entry) then this results in no formal recognition by the assessor. The assessors may, however, identify the need for 'bridging' in a particular area or areas of a course in order to achieve the required learning.

6.7.2. Communicating results: The Registry Department communicates the outcome of RPL assessment to learners including implications arising from the assessment.

## **6.8. Appeal**

6.8.1. If a candidate is dissatisfied with the assessment process and / or assessment decision, in the first instance they should arrange a feedback discussion with the Head of Academic Studies in order to ascertain and fully understand the reason(s) for the decision. Should this not resolve matters, then the learner may pursue a review or an appeal, as set out in Policy 5.7 Examination Results: Review, Recheck and Appeal.

## **6.9. Monitoring**

**6.9.1.** RPL policies and procedures are subject to ongoing monitoring and review through Programme Monitoring (Policy 9.4 IICP College Monitoring and Evaluation Policy), Programme Review (Policy 9.5 IICP College Programme Review and Revalidation), and QA and policy reviews (2.1 IICP College's Quality and Governance Framework; (i) Quality Assurance).

**6.9.2.** The RPL Assessment Committee reports to the Programme Board.

**6.9.2.1.** The following specific monitoring processes occur in relation to the RPL process, in order to assess and improve this policy:

- An Admissions Audit is carried out by the QA Manager, and submitted to the relevant Programme Boards on an annual basis. The Programme Board include consideration of this audit in their annual programme monitoring.
- Exam Board and External Examiner records are used to inform trends and anomalies in RPL admissions and exemptions in the context of student achievement.
- Standard retention and progression monitoring occurs as part of annual Programme Review. This is utilised in order to highlight if there are trends and anomalies associated with RPL admissions and exemptions.

Figure 1 RPL Process

