

PROVIDER NAME: CCT College Dublin (CCT)			
POLICY AREA: Standard 6: Admissions, Access, Transfer, Progression Recognition and Certification			
Policy and Procedure Title:	<i>CCTP602: Recognition of Prior Learning (RP(E)L), Admissions and Exemptions</i>	Policy No: CCTP602	Version: 3.0
Section 1: Introduction & Context			
Purpose of Policy:			
This policy is part of the College’s suite of access, transfer and progression related policies and procedures. It aligns with the College’s student-centred ethos, commitment to flexible learning pathways and inclusivity. It provides a consistent structure to support applicants to demonstrate and receive recognition for learning gained through diverse prior learning experiences that have been acquired through formal, non-formal, and/or informal routes.			
Scope and Applicability			
This policy applies to all modules and programmes in CCT, at all NFQ Levels and across all modes of delivery with some exceptions. For example, a programme team may identify a specific module as unsuitable for RPL because of its overall contribution to the programme. In such instances, exceptions will be clearly communicated to learners. Modules with professional requirements may also be restricted from RPL.			
Responsibilities			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dean of Faculty has overarching responsibility for operational implementation of this policy and ensuring appropriate subject matter expertise informs the process. • The Head of Admissions or nominee acts as RPL Advisor. They are responsible for facilitating the RPL application process and the provision of advisory support to applicants. • The Dean of Academic Affairs has overall responsibility for oversight and ensuring the effective implementation of this process. • Prospective learners are responsible for submitting their application and following the guidance provided in support of their application. 			
Key Terms			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of prior learning- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process by which prior learning is formally valued. It is a means by which prior learning is identified, assessed, and recognised by an educational institution as part of its programmes, courses, and/or modules on Ireland’s National Framework of Qualifications. This makes it possible for an individual to build on learning achieved and to be rewarded for it. • Formal learning- learning that took place in a formal education environment and has led to formal credits and/or award(s). Often referred to as certified or accredited learning. • Experiential learning (non-formal or informal learning)- Non-formal learning is structured experiential learning that is not awarded credit and undertaken outside mainstream education settings. For example, this could include organised work training programmes. Informal experiential learning is unstructured learning that takes place through life and work experience. 			

Section 2: Policy Statement

Part A. Principles for RP(E)L

Types of learning

CCT College Dublin is committed to the recognition of a learner's prior learning in the context of:

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** achieved through formal learning (e.g. certified, accredited).
- **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)** achieved through non-formal or informal learning (e.g. non-accredited) which can be evidenced.

Purposes of RPL

Recognition of prior learning can take place for any of the following purposes for individual learners or groups of learners:

- **Admissions requirements-** to gain entry to stage one of a programme where the standard academic programme entry requirements have not been met.
- **Advanced entry-** gain direct entry to an advanced stage of a programme following an evaluation process.
- **Exemption-** Gain exemption from a module, or modules, on a programme where applicants can demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of the relevant module or modules.

Values underpinning RP(E)L:

- **Learner and human-centeredness-** the learner is at the centre of the RPL process, recognising that learners have diverse learning experiences and needs.
- **Quality Assurance-** an evidence-based quality assurance process underpinned by local, national and international quality assurance standards and best practices.
- **Information provision-** Information on RPL is clearly visible and accessible to learners and an RPL advisor is appointed to support all RPL applicants.
- **Inclusivity-** diversity of prospective learners is acknowledged and respected during the RPL process. The process, evaluation mechanisms, and resources are informed by Universal Design for Learning and barriers to participation are proactively identified and removed where possible.
- **Fairness, Transparency and Consistency-** the process is conducted in a manner that is fair, transparent, consistent and non-discriminatory.
- **Independence and impartiality-** Assessment of prior learning will follow consistent, precise, and unambiguous assessment principles, and independence and impartiality will be key factors.
- **Training-** Assessors and other staff involved in the RPL process will be given training and support as appropriate.
- **Timeliness-** Every effort will be made to conduct assessments in a reasonable timeframe. The applicant should be enabled to complete the recognition process in a shorter time than it would take to achieve the relevant module, programme, or award.

Part B. Principles for assessment of RP(E)L Applications:

Quality Assurance Regulations:

- The focus of the RP(E)L process is to demonstrate that an applicant has previously achieved relevant learning outcomes.
- Credit may not be earned twice for the same learning achievement; however, such prior learning may be acknowledged (e.g. through an ungraded exemption).
- RP(E)L is normally considered during programme validation and revalidation processes.
- Each faculty team is responsible for identifying how RP(E)L fits in their module(s) and programmes.
- Any exemptions approved through RP(E)L will be clearly outlined on the student's transcript of results to ensure ease of recognition for other education providers and/or employers.

Validity and Relevance:

- A student's prior learning needs to be relevant to the award to which it will contribute, factoring in subject specialisms as necessary.
- The prior learning needs to be appropriately mapped to the relevant NFQ Level.
- For exemptions, prior learning needs to be mapped to the minimum intended module learning outcomes.

Sufficiency and Currency:

- Evidence of prior learning needs to be sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's prior learning.
- The prior learning claimed by the learner needs to be broadly equivalent to the volume (e.g., time and level expertise) of learning for which RP(E)L is sought.
- Sufficiency is proportionate to the purpose of the RPL process. For example, the process for recognising experiential learning will require a higher volume of evidence than evidencing formal learning where formal documentation is available.
- The prior learning claimed by the learner/prospective learner is recent and represents the learner/prospective learner's current knowledge and skills. The expectation is that the learning will normally have been acquired within the past five years, although this figure may be adjusted where there is a justified reason for doing so.

Authenticity and Reliability of Evidence:

- Evidence of prior learning submitted by the learner/prospective learner is genuine and clearly indicates that the prior learning has been achieved through the learner/prospective learner's personal efforts and achievements.
- Evidence of prior learning submitted by the learner/prospective learner is deemed to be valid and reliable.

Authenticity and Reliability of Evidence:

- Evidence of prior learning submitted by the learner/prospective learner is genuine and clearly indicates that the prior learning has been achieved through the learner/prospective learner's personal efforts and achievements.
- Evidence of prior learning submitted by the learner/prospective learner is deemed to be valid and reliable.

Limitations of RP(E)L:

- Research modules are typically excluded from the RP(E)L process because they provide direct preparation for capstone projects.
- Exemptions in the award stage of a programme are restricted to a maximum of 30 credits and exclude the capstone assessment where applicable.
- RPL is not used in CCT to gain a full academic award.
- If exemptions are assigned in the award year of a programme, the mechanism for calculating the award is at the discretion of the Dean of Academic Affairs. The award will normally be unclassified unless a grade is assigned to the exempted module.

Evidence Requirements for RPL of Formal Learning:

Students are required to provide evidence of **formal learning**, which could include:

- Transcript or Diploma Supplement and award certificate or equivalent.
- If the formal status of the applicant's results is unclear, a letter from their prior learning institution is normally required to support their application.
- Programme learning outcomes (to support advanced entry mapping) and module learning outcomes (to support module exemption mapping).

Evidence Requirements for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL):

- All applicants participating in an RPEL application process are required to
 - Submit documentary evidence and
 - Participate in an RPEL Discussion Meeting to explore and validate their experience.
- The threshold of documentary evidence required as part of an RPEL application is proportionate to the purpose of the application.
- Students are required to provide documentary **evidence of experiential learning** as relevant to the purpose of their application as outlined in the *CCT Experiential Learning Documentary Evidence Requirements* table

Stages of RP(E)L:

The RP(E)L process normally follows five stages:

- **Stage 1- Information**- The learner obtains information about what is possible and how the RPL process works
- **Stage 2- Identification, Exploration and Support**- The learner explores their prior learning with a view to making an RPL application.
- **Stage 3- Documentation/Evidence**- The learner undertakes a reflective process and gathers relevant materials to evidence their application using the provided application form.
- **Stage 4- Evaluation**- The learner's application is assessed. A range of assessment mechanisms may be used (for example portfolio of evidence, RPEL Discussion Meeting, skills demonstration).
- **Stage 5- Outcomes**- There are three potential outcomes,
 - **Successful application**- the learner receives formal recognition for their prior learning.
 - **Partially successful application**- the learner receives partial recognition for their prior learning or is asked to submit further documentation.
 - **Unsuccessful application**- the learner does not receive formal recognition for their prior learning.
- **Stage 6 Resources, Record keeping and reporting**- records and reporting are maintained in line with agreed College reporting processes.

Right of Appeal

Applicants have the right to appeal a decision on an application for recognition of prior learning in line with the College policy (CCTP512: Recheck, Review, Appeal Policy). The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Head of Admissions within 5 working days of communication of the outcome of the RPL application process. The process is then conducted in line with the normal process for appeals.

Staff Involved

Head of Admissions, Dean of Faculty, Programme Leader

Part C. Procedure for Managing Applications for RPL:**Stage 1- Information Provision**

- The Quality Assurance Office is responsible for facilitating the development of appropriate resources, disseminating policy, and ensuring appropriate training is provided for staff involved in RPL.
- The Head of Admissions and Head of Marketing are collectively responsible for ensuring:
 - Clear information and relevant contact points for further advice are communicated to applicants at every stage of the process.
 - General information about RPL will be readily available to prospective applicants in line with the College’s overall policy on provision of programme information to potential students.

Stage 2- Identification, Exploration and Support

- The potential applicant expresses interest to engage in the RPL process with the Admissions Department.
- The Head of Admissions, or nominee, acts as RPL Advisor to the potential applicant and provides relevant information (through support resources and discussion) to explore the applicant’s prior learning.
- In consultation with their RPL Advisor, the applicant determines what type of RPL application, if any, is appropriate for their needs.
- The RPL Advisor will advise if there is an existing formal learning mapping exercise completed in the College that will streamline an application.

Stage 3a- Documentation/Evidence for Formal Learning

- The applicant submits evidence of their prior formal learning in the form of certified documentation.
- Evidence of formal learning for exemptions is mapped to module learning outcomes.
- Exemptions for initial entry or advanced entry are mapped to the relevant award standards.
- If an applicant is submitting an application that includes both formal and experiential evidence, they will be directed to the experiential prior learning process.
- If an applicant does not have formal documentation, they will be directed to complete the process for RPL of experiential prior learning.

Stage 3b- Documentation/Evidence for Experiential Learning

- The RPL Advisor provides the relevant resources and RPEL Application Form to the applicant, including the discipline specific RPEL mapping tools relevant to their application with the exception of exemption applications which are mapped specifically to the relevant module learning outcomes.
- The applicant completes the RPEL Application Form (for a stage or for a module) and provides any other relevant evidence in support of their application, as indicated in the RPEL Application Form. (see “Evidence Requirements for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)”)

- Evidence is outlined in Part B of this policy.

Stage 4a- Evaluation of Formal Prior Learning

- The RPL Advisor conducts a desk-based review of the evidence provided for formal learning.
- Resources such as the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ), NARIC and CEDEPOP can be used to conduct a desk-based review of qualification equivalency for EHEA and non-EHEA programmes to assure:
 - Validity and Relevance of prior formal learning
 - Sufficiency and currency of prior formal learning
 - Authenticity and Reliability of prior formal learning
- The RPL advisor confirms subject relevance with the Dean of Faculty and Programme Lead as relevant.
- When there is insufficient evidence to approve an application for formal learning, the applicant may be advised to complete the experiential prior learning process.

Stage 4b- Evaluation of Experiential Prior Learning

- Evaluation of Experiential Prior Learning is conducted by an assessment team consisting of the RPL Advisor and subject matter experts, normally the Dean of Faculty and Programme Lead.
- The relevant award standards and CCT Experiential Learning Documentary Evidence Requirements are used to support applicants' mapping of prior experiential learning to the relevant NFQ level.
- The assessment team conducts a desk-based review of the application using approved mapping tools.
- The assessment team agrees a set of competency-based questions based on the applicant's application, sample questions are provided to the applicant in advance.
- The assessment team invites the applicant to an RPL Discussion Meeting to initially explore and validate their prior experience where appropriate, followed by an official RPL Interview.
- The assessment team makes a final determination on the assessment of prior learning using the approved mapping tools, incorporating their assessment of both the desk-based review and the RPL Interview.

Stage 5- Outcome

The RPL Advisor is responsible for communicating the outcomes of the RPEL application process to both relevant staff and the applicant:

- **Partially successful-** if the application is partially successful, the outcome of the application along with the limitations of that outcome is communicated, including the reason why part of the application is unsuccessful.
- **Successful-** if the application is successful the outcome of the application is communicated to the student including any implications such as how their award will be calculated if an exemption is granted during an award stage.
- **Unsuccessful-** if the application is unsuccessful (e.g. if the applicant is not granted an exemption or accepted onto a programme or course of study through RPL), any available options or supports will be outlined to the applicant. The applicant's right of appeal in line with the College's appeal process will be communicated to them.

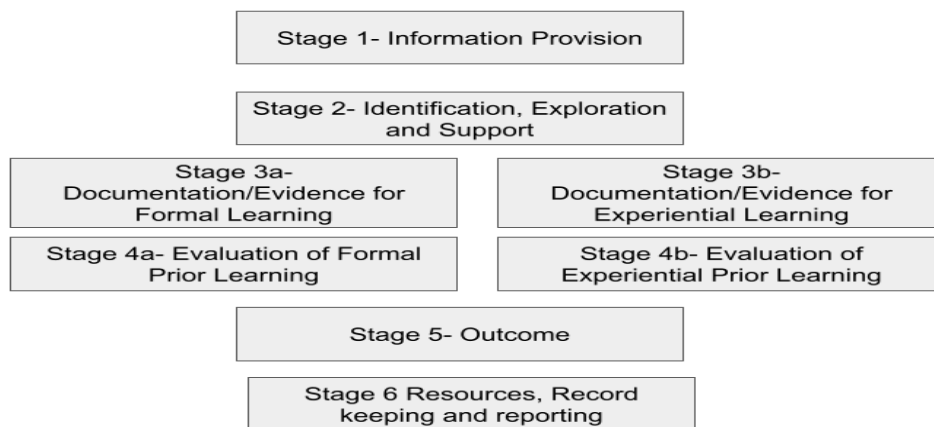
Stage 6 - Resources, Record keeping and reporting

- The Dean of Academic Affairs coordinates the development of RPL Mapping processes in collaboration with the faculty team.

- The Head of Admissions maintains an RPL Mapping Bank for formal learning mapping processes. Every time a new formal learning mapping is completed, it is added to an institutional bank of RPL mappings.
- The Head of Admissions provides a summary report to the QEC and Academic Council after each intake.
- RPL data is reported in external quality assurance processes such as programme review and institutional review.
- Where an applicant is successful in achieving advanced entry or exemptions on a programme, this is recorded on their Moodle profile by the RPL Advisor.
- Individual records maintained for all learners for their own individual records and to inform institutional reporting mechanisms in line with the College's retention schedule.

Workflow Diagram for RPL Procedure

RPL Workflow Diagram



Monitoring

Monitor (Job Title)	Frequency	Monitoring Method(s)
Head of Admissions Programme Leader Dean of Academic Affairs	Annual	Admissions External Examiner reports Staff development evaluation forms Admissions Audit RPL Records

POLICY CONTROL SHEET

Policy Title	Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning (RP(E)L), Admissions and Exemptions
Responsible Officer(s)	Dean of Academic Affairs
Issuance Date	June 2025
Effective Date	June 2025
Last Review Date	September 2019
Supersedes	Version 2.0
Next Review Date	August 2027
Designated Reviewer(s)	Dean of Academic Affairs

Revision History

Revision	Approval Date	Revision Description	Originator	Approved By
New Policy	August 2015	New QA system	Senior Management Team	Head of Academics, College Registrar
2.0	March 2018	Updates to reflect differentiation between RPL admissions and RPL exemptions. Detail of criteria and standards to be applied and clarification on guidance to issued.	Dean of Academic Affairs	Academic Council
2.1	September 2019	Edits to reflect organisational change. Requirement to complete RPL record for learner file.	SMT / QA Committee	Academic Council
3	June 2025	New Policy to reflect sectoral development and emerging practices.	Dean of Academic Affairs	Academic Council

References upon which the Policy section is based

CCT Policy area	Access, Transfer and Progression
Statutory & System Wide Basis	<p>The following legal, regulatory, and best practice context applies to this policy area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QQI Policy Restatement: Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training. • The Principles and Operational Guidelines for The Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training (NQAI) June 2005, republished by QQI in 2015 • Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022 • QQI Award Standards • Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) • Pilot Framework for RPL in Higher Education • National qualifications frameworks (NQF) online tool • NARIC
Related CCT Policies / Forms	<p>CCTP601 – Access, Transfer and Progression</p> <p>CCTF132 – Admissions Form</p>