

## Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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<b>Purpose</b>	Outline the policy related to admission of students to programmes on the basis of recognition of prior learning (RPL)
<b>Policy Author</b>	Head of Teaching + Learning, Registrar
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Office of Registrar
<b>Intended Audience</b>	Registrar, Heads of Faculty, Heads of Department, Programme Coordinators, all academic staff, Access Office, Admissions Office, all potential applicants
<b>Approved by Academic Council</b>	16 October 2023
<b>Commencement Date</b>	December 2023
<b>Related Documents</b>	The RPL policy supports the achievement of the <a href="#">IADT Policy and Strategy for Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning</a> and is part of the <a href="#">IADT Learning, Teaching and Assessment Procedures</a> . It complies with <a href="#">QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) Assessment and Standards</a> . This revised policy and associated documents implement recommendations from the <a href="#">National Pilot Framework for RPL</a> , funded by the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 3, Agility and Innovation.
<b>Related Forms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>

## Document Version History

Previous Version	Notes	Replaced by
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## Introduction

IADT aims to facilitate entry to and participation in all of its academic programmes. The admission of students to programmes on the basis of recognition of prior learning (RPL) is an important part of this process.

The means by which prior learning is identified, assessed, and formally recognised by an educational institution is through the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This makes it possible for an individual's learning to be acknowledged in the education system and to build on learning achieved in an accredited setting.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is a process by which prior learning is formally valued. The concept of **lifelong learning** indicates that learning encompasses the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. These may be defined as follows:

- **Formal learning** takes place through programmes of study that are delivered by education providers and that attract awards or credits;
- **Non-formal learning** 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, digital badges, or in community-based learning;
- **Informal learning** 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, and competences.<sup>1</sup>

## Principles of RPL in IADT

The following principles guide the implementation of RPL in IADT:

- **Inclusion:** RPL is open to all individuals regardless of age, background or previous academic experience.
- **Equity:** The RPL process in IADT is open and transparent and places the learner at the centre of the process.
- **Authenticity:** RPL assessments are based on credible evidence provided by candidates, which are verified and validated by appropriately qualified academic assessors.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the National Pilot Framework for Recognition of Prior Learning, 2022. Informal and Non-formal learning are also known as 'experiential learning'.

- **Academic Standards:** RPL assessments adhere to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), the Module Learning Outcomes (MLO's) and Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO's).
- **Transparency:** The RPL process and criteria are clearly communicated to prospective applicants through Admissions and the Academic team.
- **Continuous Improvement:** This policy will be reviewed and enhanced based on feedback and best practice. Next date for review is May 2027.

The RPL policy supports the achievement of the *IADT Policy and Strategy for Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning* and is part of the IADT Learning, Teaching and Assessment Procedures both available from [IADT Policies + Procedures](#). It complies with [QQI \(Quality and Qualifications Ireland\) Assessment and Standards](#). This revised policy and associated documents implement recommendations from the [National Pilot Framework for RPL](#), funded by the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 3, Agility and Innovation.

There are six parts to this policy:

Part 1 Overview of RPL process in IADT

Part 2 Application for admission to programmes.

Part 3 Application for admission to stages other than stage 1 of a programme.

Part 4 Application for exemptions from modules of a programme.

Part 5 Application for access to short courses, SPA's, Micro-credentials

Part 6 Glossary

## Part 1: Overview of the RPL process in IADT:

The Recognition of Prior Learning process may involve individuals or cohorts of learners.

The process of Recognition of Prior Learning includes five stages.<sup>2</sup> These are:

- A. **Information:** During this stage, the learner obtains user-friendly information about what is possible and how the Recognition of Prior Learning process works.
- B. **Identification:** During this stage, the learner explores their prior learning (in relation to a programme's entry requirements or the learning outcomes of a module or a programme) with a view to making a claim for formal recognition.
- C. **Documentation:** This stage makes visible the individual's learning in the context of their claim. This involves a reflective process and identifying relevant materials to substantiate their claim.
- D. **Assessment:** This stage must be appropriate to the application and fit for purpose. If the claim is successful, the learner proceeds to the next stage.
- E. Formal recognition or **Certification**, which will lead to one or more of the following:
  - Entry to a programme
  - Credit towards an award or exemption from some programme modules
  - Advanced entry to a programme
  - Full award.<sup>3</sup>

If the applicant's claim is unsuccessful, their options and any available supports will be outlined. As noted above, the applicant may avail of the appeals procedure that is in place, through the Registrar's Office.

The Institution's (IADT's) RPL prerequisites are that the prior learning is:

- Current – achieved within the last five years;
- Relevant – the subject area is appropriate for the course and the learning outcomes map onto module(s)/programme that they are to be claimed against;
- Evidenced – transcripts or certificates for credit transfer and the production of a Portfolio/dossier for RPL;
- At the required level – for credit transfer it needs to be comparable in level and academic standard with the content and learning outcomes equivalent to an award at the Institution;
- At same credit volume or higher than the modules being claimed against.

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<sup>2</sup> This process is adapted from the Council of the European Union (2012) and the EU-funded 'RPL in Practice' and VINCE (Validation for inclusion of new citizens in Europe) projects.

<sup>3</sup> Higher education institutions will indicate which of these options may be sought by applicants. For example, not all higher institutions may wish to offer eligibility for full awards through Recognition of Prior Learning.

For postgraduate taught applicants: the maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award. In the case of PG Diploma award to MA, the Institute reserves the right to revisit this weighting.

For undergraduate/integrated master's applicants: the maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may normally be granted is 33% of the total number of credit points required for an award, unless deemed by the Registrar.

In addition:

- Exemptions may not normally be granted where a student has previously registered for and failed part of an award and wishes to seek readmission to the same or similar award.
- Exemptions may not normally be granted in a degree year or a programme of 1 year duration.
- Institutions may not award exemptions for core modules except via a concession approved by the Registrar.
- The Institution may not award exemptions for pre-requisites in certain disciplines e.g. where the modules are required for Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) recognition or are needed for professional practice, unless the applicant can show that the identical modules have been completed elsewhere.
- The Institution decides how much credit to award an individual student via RPL, based on the level, extent and perceived relevance of the material (both knowledge and skills based) contained within the course/qualification offered by the applicant when compared with their intended course of study.

## Part 2: Application for admission to programmes – Stage (Year) 1

Each faculty identifies a **designated RPL mentor** for admission to its programmes. In most instances this will be the Programme Chair, Course Coordinator or Head of Department.

Each programme identifies appropriate academic work e.g., reading & comprehension, critical analysis, portfolio of artwork, essay or whatever is appropriate to the discipline and NFQ level and the applicant's academic position. This is complemented by the IADT application form, a Europass CV or discipline equivalent, and a dossier of evidence in support of the application that is informed by the national standards for the discipline. This is the RPL pack for applicants.

Applicants wishing to apply for admissions to programmes based on recognition of prior learning should:

- Complete an application form
- This is the standard application form for the programme, available on the Institute's website or from Admissions. On this form, applicants indicate they wish to be considered an RPL candidate.

On receipt of the application form the Admissions Office informs the relevant faculty/programme and the designated RPL mentor contacts the applicant. The designated RPL mentor briefs applicants on the RPL requirements for the programme.

### **Prepare the RPL submission**

The applicant completes a Europass CV, or equivalent as per discipline, the identified academic work, and prepares a dossier of evidence to support their application. During this process the RPL mentor and/or Head of Department for the faculty/programme are available to support the applicant and answer questions. Sufficient time is allowed for the process to enable the applicant to present the required submission.

### **Assessment of RPL submission**

1. The applicant's submission i.e., application form, Europass CV or other as advised, required academic work and dossier is reviewed and where appropriate the applicant is interviewed.
2. The applicant's submission (and the interview, if required) is assessed by the RPL mentor and Head of Department against the appropriate NFQ level indicators and learning outcomes required. A recommendation is prepared on whether or not the applicant has demonstrated sufficient prior learning to be admitted to the programme.
3. The report is sent to the Admissions Office.

### **Offer of a place**

4. If the assessors are satisfied that the applicant has met the entry requirements and places are available, they are contacted by the Admissions Office with a letter offering them a place. Standard registration procedures then apply.
5. If the assessors are not satisfied that the applicant has met the entry requirements, then no place is offered, and the applicant is informed by the Admissions Office.

### **Appeals procedure**

6. If the applicant is refused a place, then they may appeal the decision of the assessors. The applicant should write to the Registrar and outline the reasons for the appeal. The Registrar will review the case. The decision of the Registrar regarding admission is final.



## Part 3: Application for admission to stages other than stage 1 of a programme

### Direct Entry

1. Where direct entry exists between a College of Further Education and IADT, applicants apply for admission using the **Direct Entry application form**. Provided the applicant complies with requirements and places are available, the admission application is processed.

### Evidence of achievement of learning outcomes for preceding stages

2. Where applicants are seeking admission to a stage 2, 3 or 4 on a programme other than based on an identified link with a College of Further Education they will need to provide evidence that they have achieved the learning outcomes of the stages preceding the stage of application. That is, to be admitted to stage 2, applicants must provide evidence that they have achieved the learning outcomes for all the stage 1 modules.

This evidence is submitted in an analogous way to the process for admission to the programme. The procedure is as follows:

1. Completion of application form, Europass CV or equivalent and preparation of dossier. In this case specific evidence is required of the achievement of the learning outcomes of the modules in the appropriate stages.
2. Internal assessment

Please see the RPL policy for admission to programme (Part 1) for a full outline of the procedure.

## Part 4: Applications for exemptions from modules of a programme

1. Current IADT students wishing to apply for exemption from a module or modules at any stage within a programme are seeking recognition of prior learning for the learning outcomes in the module(s) from which exemption is sought. They need to present an argument that they have achieved the learning outcomes of the module. This may be a previous module taken, assessed and certified. In this case it would be necessary to provide documentary evidence to compare the modules, NFQ level and stage.
2. In the case of experiential learning, it is necessary to present a dossier that provides evidence of the achievement of the learning outcomes. An internal assessment procedure takes place which would result in the acceptance or rejection of the dossier for module credit.

The procedure is:

- Apply to programme Chair in writing seeking exemption with relevant supporting documents.

- Application is reviewed by programme Chair or nominated person and Head of Department.
- Application is submitted to the Registrar by the Head of Department with recommendation for approval or rejection of application.
- Decision on exemption is made by the Registrar and letter is sent to the student.

### Notes

- (a) Where modules contribute to an integrated assessment, exemption from the module may be granted but the entire assessment task must be completed.
- (b) Where modules contribute to an award classification it may be necessary for the student to complete the module assessment. Alternatively, the award may be unclassified, or the module may be excluded from GPA calculations.
- (c) Exemption from a module means that the exempted module may not be used for compensation unless the exempted module is assessed.
- (d) Final year of programmes or programmes of 1 year duration will not be eligible for module exemption.

In all cases, the student must be made aware of this before applying.

## Part 5: Application for access to short courses, Special Purpose Awards (SPA's), Micro-credentials

IADT offers several stand-alone modules as certificates through the Institute and the Creative Futures Academy (CFA). Applications for these courses may require an RPL process, if:

1. The applicant **has not** achieved the appropriate accredited learning to facilitate progression into the level of the module, as specified by NFQ or through the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NAIRIC).
2. The applicant **has** achieved accredited learning to apply for the module, but not in the discipline of the requested module.

In the case of number 2, the applicant will be informed if the RPL process will be required by the admissions and academic team.

If RPL is required, the process for admission to the short course will be as outlined in Part 2 above and the applicant will be supported through this process by the admissions and academic team.

### Information for international applicants

Please note that where an applicant's first language is not English, they must meet the Institute's English language requirement as stated at <https://iadt.ie/study/international-students/>

## Part 6: Glossary of Terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Applicant	The person applying for admission to programmes and/or exemption from modules based on RPL.
Dossier	The document that identifies the applicant's prior learning organised by the strands and sub strands of the National Framework of Qualifications.
Module Learning Outcomes (MLO's)	Statements of the knowledge, skills, and competencies that individual students should possess and can demonstrate at the completion of a module.
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre – part of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC)-NARIC network.
Portfolio	A compilation of creative work often presented as evidence for admission to programmes.
Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO's)	Statements of the knowledge, skills, and competencies that individual students should possess and can demonstrate at the completion of a programme.
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RPL assessor	The person who reviews the RPL application and determines if the applicant meets the admission criteria for programmes. May involve admissions and academic staff.
RPL mentor	The person who supports the RPL applicant in the preparation of the submission, usually the Programme Chair, Course Coordinator or Head of Department.