

# Hibernia College Quality Framework

## Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning



HIBERNIA  
COLLEGE

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

This policy assists in the implementation of Hibernia College's *Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression* and in fulfilling the College's mission to make higher professional education accessible to all, regardless of their geographical location or stage in life. It provides a framework by which the lifelong learner can present their learning from diverse contexts and have it formally recognised by the College as part of an academic programme.

### 1.2 Scope

- a. *To whom does the policy apply?*
  - i. This policy applies both to applicants to and students on Hibernia College programmes leading to awards in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- b. *In what situations does the policy apply?*
  - i. The policy applies where the College is managing applications and requests from students for the formal recognition of their previously attained learning, in respect of either entry or progression on an academic programme.
- c. *Who is responsible for implementing the policy?*
  - i. The Academic Board is responsible for approving and overseeing the implementation of this policy.
  - ii. The Registrar is responsible for the implementation of the policy in consultation with directors of programmes.

### 1.3 Definitions

#### a. *Recognition of Prior Learning*

Hibernia College adopts the 2015 definition of the Recognition of Prior Learning from the National Teaching and Learning Forum:

*"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined as a process whereby prior learning is given a value (European Commission, 2008; NQAI, 2005; OECD, 2004). RPL can operate to provide recognition for advanced entry and non-standard admissions to educational pathways and is also used to award credit for elements within programmes.<sup>1</sup>"*

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<sup>1</sup> National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2015), *A Current Overview of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Irish Higher Education*, Section 2.1. Available at: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Project-2.pdf> [Accessed 29/08/2018].

## b. Prior Learning

Prior learning can be:

- i. Prior formal learning — learning which has already attracted formal certification within an education system, including the NFQ.
- ii. Informal — learning acquired through day-to-day activities which may be unplanned and unintentional.
- iii. Non-formal learning — learning which is acquired through planned activities but does not result in formal certification.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

#### a. *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) 2012 Act*

This policy guides the College in the implementation of the legal requirement to have policy and procedure in place to facilitate access, transfer and progression (ATP)<sup>2</sup>.

#### b. *Quality Assurance Guidelines*

This policy is designed with regard to the *European Standards and Guidelines*<sup>3</sup> and QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines<sup>4</sup>, both of which set out the requirement to have policy and procedure in place to support admission and progression and ATP.

#### c. *Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression*

This policy is also designed with regard to QQI's policy on ATP<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.2 National and European Policy Context

This policy has been designed in the context of a significant body of policy discourse nationally and in the European Higher Education Area. The key text guiding the understanding and development of RPL in Hibernia College is *Recognition of Prior Learning: a Focus on Practice*<sup>6</sup>.

## 3 Policy Statements

### 3.1 Principles for the Recognition of Prior Learning

#### a. *Overarching Principles*

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<sup>2</sup> *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012* (2012), Section 56.2. Available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html> [Accessed 29/08/2018].

<sup>3</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) et al. (2015), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2nd edn., Section 1.4. Available at: [http://www.engaq.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](http://www.engaq.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf) [Accessed 29/08/2018].

<sup>4</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2016), *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines*, Section 3.2. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf> [Accessed 29/08/2018].

<sup>5</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2015), *Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education (Restatement)*. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Access%20Transfer%20and%20Progression%20-%20QQI%20Policy%20Restatement%202015.pdf> [Accessed 29/09/2018].

<sup>6</sup> Irene Sheridan, Margaret Linehan and EINE (2009), *Recognition of Prior Learning: A Focus on Practice*.

RPL in Hibernia College is:

- i. Transparent.
- ii. Fair and consistent, in any assessment procedure.

*b. Lifelong learning*

- i. The College strives to promote lifelong learning through this policy.

*c. Possible outcomes*

Hibernia College, through the recognition of prior learning, can offer a learner:

- i. Entry to a programme or course of study.
- ii. An award of advanced academic standing (entry to a programme beyond the normal starting point).
- iii. Exemption from a requirement to complete certain modules of a programme.

*d. Award standards and learning outcomes*

- i. All claims to meet entry requirements or obtain an exemption via RPL are assessed against the appropriate award standards and learning outcomes for the programme concerned.
- ii. A learner must provide evidence that they have attained the learning outcomes identified either for entry or for progression through a programme.

*e. Evidence of learning*

Evidence of learning may be demonstrated through a portfolio that includes, amongst other things:

- i. Reflective accounts of the experience and the learning gained through that experience.
- ii. Statements detailing the learning acquired.
- iii. Provision of certificates, transcripts, and programme documents.
- iv. Statements from employers, lecturers and so on.
- v. Evidence that is not normally more than five years old, in order to ensure currency of learning and knowledge.

*f. Assessment*

When assessing a claim for prior learning, examiners must be assured of the quality of the assessment. Consideration should be given to the:

- i. Appropriateness of the evidence to the learning outcomes.
- ii. Equivalence of the award level of the learning gained.
- iii. Currency, reliability and validity of the evidence provided.
- iv. Learning gained as opposed to the experience gained.

## **3.2 Some Rules and Limitations around Awards, Classifications and Grading**

Hereunder is a direct extract from *Assessment and Awards, 2013*<sup>7</sup>:

### **4.4.2 Exemption from Studying a Module**

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<sup>7</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2013), *Assessments and Standards: Revised, 2013*. Available at: [https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment and Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment%20and%20Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf) [Accessed 29/08/2018].

- For the purpose of this section, exemption means exemption from parts of a programme. (Note that the term exemption is also used in a different sense to indicate satisfactory completion of a module.) Exemption procedures must be consistent with the necessity for learners to demonstrate the learning outcomes required to qualify for an award. Exemption allows those learning outcomes to be achieved and/or demonstrated in alternative ways. It also recognises that the learning outcomes may have been achieved prior to enrolment in the programme.
- In principle, exemptions are permitted at any stage of a programme, subject to the relevant programme and constituent module assessment strategies.
- Where the result of the module is required for calculating an award classification, the provider should, where feasible, establish a fair, consistent and transparent process for grading the learner's achievements in respect of the exempted module's learning outcomes.
- Where this is not possible, the award can only be recommended without classification.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning – Uncertified [prior] Learning**

- A learner may be exempted from participating in a module if he/she has already attained the minimum intended module learning outcomes. The demonstrable prior learning should be a sufficiently good match to the minimum intended module learning outcomes to justify exemption from the module in the context of the overall programme.
- In the particular case where the relevant prior learning is uncertified (e.g. prior experiential learning), the provider should assess the learner 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. Furthermore, a grade (percentage mark or alphabetic grade) should be available in principle. However, providers may choose not to grade if the assessment arrangement might not provide grading which is consistent with the regular assessment instruments.
- If the module is one which contributes to the award classification, prior learning achievement **must be graded** in order for the award to be classified. Otherwise, an unclassified award should be made.
- Where the module does not contribute to the award classification, the prior learning achievement does not need to be graded. When a grade is not assigned, the result for learners who demonstrate the required learning should be returned as Exemption Granted.
- Where a grade is awarded, it can be used in compensation etc., as with any regularly passed module.
- Where grading is not feasible, there may be circumstances in which a learner might be advantaged by waiving a right to exemption to enable award classification. The provider should foresee and provide for such situations and should also ensure that learners are aware of any such consequences.

## Recognition of Prior Learning – Certified Learning

There are two scenarios of prior certified learning.

### Scenario 1

The learning is 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. Subject to Sectoral Convention 5<sup>8</sup>, 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 should be returned as Exemption Granted. The learner **should not** be granted any ECTS credit because credit has already been granted in the prior qualification. If the module is one that would normally contribute to the award classification, such exemption should only entitle a learner to an unclassified award unless it is feasible to recognise, or award, a grade. Any grade awarded/recognised should be consistent with the prior award classification and the module grades in the associated Europass Diploma Supplement.

### Scenario 2

The learning is certified by an awarding body in the form of a minor, special purpose or supplemental award or it is certified in respect of a period of study, and<sup>9</sup> the relevant credit **has not** already been used to meet the credit requirements for a major award. This case of prior certified learning can be handled in the same way as prior uncertified learning with one exception: the provider should not require the learner to undergo assessment provided that the attainment of the minimum intended module learning outcomes can be demonstrated. However, where there is a need for a grade to be assigned — e.g. where it contributes to an award classification — assessment may be necessary. The learner may transfer his/her credit. A grade is available in principle, but providers may choose not to grade if consistency with the grading in regular assessment instruments cannot be assured. For learners who demonstrate the required learning but are not graded, the result should be returned as Exemption Granted.

## 4 Document Control

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Author	Registrar		
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<sup>8</sup> Sectoral Convention 5 - Post-award Achievement Required for an Additional Major Award at the same Level Subject to specified conditions, a graduate holding a higher education and training award may present for and, if successful, achieve a further major award at the same level within the same generic area of study. This must involve the attainment of new learning outcomes (i.e. post-award achievement).

<sup>9</sup> If the credit has been used, Scenario 1 applies.

Related Policies	<a href="#">Policy for Assessment, Grading and Certification</a> <a href="#">Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression</a>
Related Procedures	<a href="#">Procedure for Recognition of Prior Learning</a>
Related Resources	