LEARNER PREPARES RPL APPLICATION → RPL APPLICATION *(INCLUDES Prior certified learning and/or prior experiential learning)* → REVIEWED BY PROGRAMME DIRECTOR → SUFFICIENT INFORMATION → recommendations → RPL COMMITTEE → DECISIONS TO LEARNER → APPEAL → DECISION PASSED TO ADMISSIONS

APPEAL PROCEDURE (3.11)

Appeal Decision is final

Introduction and Context

The purpose of this document is to detail Saint Nicholas Montessori College Ireland (SNMCI)'s policy and procedures in accrediting Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Definitions

Recognition of Prior Learning - Recognition of Prior Learning is a term used to denote an assessment process conducted for initial entry or advanced entry onto a programme of study where credit/ exemptions may be granted to the applicant.

Prior Learning can be recognised in two ways:

1. **Prior Certified Learning (PCL)** is where an applicant has already achieved a recognised qualification for a formal programme or module of study. It is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body e.g. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), a University or an Institute of Technology, nationally and/or internationally.

   PCL may entitle the applicant to:
   (a) Admission to a programme or course of study.
   (b) Award of advanced academic standing.
   (c) Exemptions from modules on a programme.

2. **Prior Experiential Learning** (PEL) denotes knowledge or skills acquired through life, work experience, and study not supported by formal accreditation.

Principles and Policy

SNMCI applies the following principles to the RPL process:
- The RPL process will give value to all learning, both certified and experiential;
- Participation in the RPL process is a voluntary matter for the learner;
- RPL will provide opportunities for access, transfer and progression in education and training;
- RPL is embedded within the quality assurance procedures of SNMCI;
- RPL will maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its awards;
- Processes and practices for the RPL are clearly documented;
- Processes and practices for RPL are communicated openly and clearly to all participants in the process i.e. applicants, Programme Directors, lecturers, admissions staff, assessors etc;
- Assessment criteria for RPL are made explicit to applicants, and applied consistently and fairly;

- Assessment criteria are based on learning outcomes of awards or standards of knowledge, skill and competence as set out by QQI;
- Assessment and verification mechanisms for RPL are appropriate and fit for purpose;
- Guidance and support is available for applicants and all those involved in the RPL process;
- The RPL processes is clear, fair and transparent and conducted within a reasonable time frame;
- The RPL processes is organised in such a way that it does not create barriers for the applicant;
- Appropriate resources to support the RPL processes are in place;
- An appropriate appeals mechanism is in place;

Where **PCL** is the basis for RPL, the applicant is **required** to produce evidence of the certified learning which may include the following:
(a) Transcript of results;
(b) Syllabus of previous modules/ subjects;
(c) Past exam papers where appropriate; (See Procedure below)

Note: SNMCI must be satisfied that the evidence presented demonstrates the learning that has been achieved prior to admission onto its programme.

Where **PEL** is the basis for RPL, the applicant is **required** to produce a portfolio of evidence which may include the following:
(a) References from previous employers;
(b) CV, outlining career, voluntary work etc.;
(c) Job descriptions and experiences, verified by an employer;
(d) Details of any 'on the job' training, supported by certificates for qualifications, training courses etc.;
(e) Professional licenses/registrations or membership of professional organisations;   (See Procedure below)

Note: Credit for PEL can only be awarded on the basis of the demonstrable achievement of the learning outcomes (not the experience).

RPL AND THE MODULE/ STAGE
SNMCI is committed to the promotion of RPL as a means to the realisation of learners' ambitions. It is important that the learner is aware of the context of the decision and his/ her programme of study.
Module
A module is a discreet unit of learning, integrated within itself, but also with other modules with the programme of study. SNMCI's policy is to

construct modules on the basis of multiples of 5 ECTS, with 5 ECTS being the most common. For this reason, exemptions may only be awarded for complete modules.

Results

When approved, the outcome of the RPL process, irrespective of the source, PCL or PEL, will lead to the result EXEMPTION GRANTED in the non-award stage by the Examinations Board.

RPL in Award Stage

Exemptions are not allowed in the Award Stage of any programme. Any module which forms the basis of award classification must be marked/ graded for that purpose.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

The External Examiner has the right to review material which ordinarily forms part of SNMCI's examinations and awarding of marks. For this reason, all evidence submitted by the applicant to support his/ her application for RPL, together with SNMCI's recommendations must be kept for the normal period specified for retaining archived assessment documents.

COSTS

The fee for the submission of RPL application will be determined by the CEO on an annual basis.

The fees will also reflect the volume of work undertaken by SNMCI to support the learner in preparing the application and its subsequent assessment. There will be a separate fee for those submitting an appeal.

GUIDING POLICY DOCUMENTS

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2005) *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training*

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2013) *Assessment and Standards*

Recognition of Prior Learning – A Focus on Practice (EIE Project, 2009)

Staff Involved:

Admissions; Learner/Applicant; PD/DPD; DQAA;RPL Committee chaired by the Head of Examinations and Registrations

	Person/s Responsible	Records generated to ensure evidence of follow through
Procedure: **Roles and Responsibilities:** **Admissions Officer**	**Admissions Officer**	**On-line application**

(a) Ensures each applicant is aware of RPL guidelines, including the need to apply in good time; (b) Refers applications for RPL to the Programme Director/s as applicable; **Applicant:** (a) Provide appropriate evidence, including portfolio to support RPEL application if applicable; (b) Responds in a timely manner to requests for additional information/ clarifications; (c) May invoke appeals procedure against decision of RPL Committee; (d) Accepts or declines RPL judgement as soon as possible **Programme Director/Deputy Programme Director:** (a) Reverts to applicant if there are gaps in the application documentation; (b) Liaises with the Director of Quality Assurance and Academic Affairs (DQAA) as needed; (c) Makes recommendations to the RPL Committee; (d) Acts as member of RPL Committee; **Director of Quality and Academic Affairs:** (a) Notes the recommendations of the PD/DPD on applications for Prior Certified Learning; (b) Notes the recommendations of the PD/DPD on applications for Prior Experiential Learning; (c) Acts as member of RPL Committee; (d) Makes recommendations to RPL Committee particularly as they relate to Prior Experiential Learning; (e) Ensures compliance with SNMCI RPL policy; **RPL Committee:** (a) Is Chaired by the Head of Examinations and Registrations (b) Notes, approves (or otherwise) recommendations made by PD's DPD's and DQAA in cases of Certified Prior Learning and Prior Experiential Learning; (c) Notifies Admissions and Learners of the decisions of the RPL Committee; (d) Publishes decisions on the internal group dripper;	**PD/DPD** **Applicant** **PD/DPD** **DQAA** **RPL Committee**	data **Transcripts** **Syllabi** **Assessment outlines** **Portfolios** **Minutes** **Recommendations** **to RPL Comm** **Minutes** **Recommendations** **to RPL Comm**

(e) Compiles annual report for Academic Board; (f) Conducts annual review of RPL policy;	**Chair**	
Assessing Prior Certified Learning When an applicant presents prior certified learning in order to gain admission, advanced academic standing or exemption(s), the Programme Director will base his/her recommendations on the following:		**Minutes** **RPL Reports** **Annual Report**
(a) Level of Prior Award on the NFQ: In the case of exemptions, the PCL must be at the same level. It is a requirement that the PCL submitted must be successfully passed and completed. If the previous module was failed or not completed, then it may not be used as part of this process.		
(b) Comparison of Programme/ Module Learning Outcomes (PLOs/ MLOs). In this regard, a comparison is conducted by reference to the learning outcomes of the PCL to the learning outcomes of the module(s)/programme for which the applicant is seeking the exemption(s). Where there is sufficient similarity, then an exemption may be awarded.	**PD/DPD** **Applicant**	
(c) Currency of Prior Certified Learning. The PCL must have been achieved in a comparatively appropriate time frame. While it is difficult to be definitive with regard to that time-scale, the Programme Director must take account of the nature of the curriculum content. For example, the regulatory framework in ECEC has changed dramatically in recent times, while e.g. the core elements of sociology/psychology outcomes remain valid across a longer span.	**PD** **DQAA**	**Transcripts** **Syllabi** **Assessment outlines**
International Qualifications Applicants seeking RPCL on the basis of foreign qualifications should contact Qualifications Recognition (www.qualificationsrecognition.ie) to have their qualifications aligned with the appropriate Irish qualification. If any of the evidence submitted as part of this process is not available in English, then it must be translated and stamped by a translation service. The onus is on each applicant to ensure that the information submitted is accurate.	**Applicant**	
Guidelines for Prior Certified Learning when dealing with exemptions It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for the RPCL in advance of the programme	**Examinations office**	**Officially translated**

commencement. If a decision has not been received before the commencement of the programme, applicants must continue to attend class until a decision has been made (and written confirmation received) on whether the exemption is granted or not. PCL may entitle the candidate to exemptions on a programme and the record for that learner should be noted on the exam broadsheet as an EX (Exemption Granted) for the module(s) in question.		**Transcripts** **Syllabi** **Assessment outlines**
Conditions/ Recommendations Exemption/ advanced academic standing is awarded on the basis of the demonstrable achievement of the programme/ module learning outcomes. Where the Programme Director is of the view that these have not been fully achieved, he/she has the right to recommend that exemptions be granted with conditions / recommendations (*e.g. additional research/ assignment is carried out, attendance at specific workshops etc*.)	**PD/DPD** **Applicant**	**Written recommendations of PD**
Limitations for Prior Certified Learning When PCL is accepted as the basis for granting an exemption on a programme of study, additional applications using the same learning for the granting of further exemptions in the same programme will **not** be considered. Some programmes may require a limitation on the volume of exemptions or on the type of learning that may be exempt due to implications for third party or other State/ professional bodies.	**RPL Committee/PD**	
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (PEL) **Introduction** This involves the awarding of credit for learning from experience. This is primarily intended for mature applicants who have acquired learning through experience or through non-accredited bodies. As a general principle, credit is given for learning, *not for experience per se*. The portfolio of evidence must be prepared in such a way that the matching of the module learning outcomes to the prior learning is clearly demonstrated.	**Applicant**	
Portfolio of Evidence To achieve this, the applicant must submit evidence, which may include some or all of the	**Applicant**	

following:
  a) References from previous employers;
  b) CV, outlining career, voluntary work etc.;
  c) Job descriptions and experiences, verified by an employer;
  d) Details of any 'on the job' training, supported by certificates for qualifications, training courses etc.;
  e) Sample work such as drawings, minutes from meetings, lesson plans and other specific tasks undertaken in the workplace;
  f) Evidence from the applicant's personal life;
  g) Published work;
  h) Professional licenses/registrations or membership of professional organisations;
  i) Acknowledged accomplishments;
  j) Diaries and other journals supporting evidence of learning;
  k) Relevant recreational activities or hobbies;
	PD
	DQAA
		Portfolio of evidence
		As described

The applicant may be required to provide verification from previous or current employers that the learning stated has been achieved. As part of the assessment, the Programme Director/ Director of Quality may also interview the applicant.	**Applicant**	
Applicant's Responsibility It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for RPEL through the Admissions Officer, who will pass the application for evaluation to the relevant person.	**Applicant**	
Applicants must submit their claim on the relevant online form. SNMCI supplies a Learner Information Guide.	**SNMCI**	
Preparing a Portfolio of Evidence The portfolio of evidence is the key element in this process. It should contain descriptive and reflective pieces, which give a clear indication of how the evidence meets the learning outcomes of the module from which the exemption is sought. To facilitate its timely assessment, the evidence should be structured in a manner which illustrates the achievement of the learning outcome(s) in question.	**DQAA** **PD/DPD** **RPL COM**	

Assessing Prior Experiential Learning
Similar to PCL, assessment of a portfolio is designed to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. When assessing portfolios, it is important to consider the currency of the prior learning. It must be achieved within a suitable time frame – for example within the last five years (*depending on the nature of the learning achieved*).
With this in mind, the following criteria should be used in determining the quality of the material presented in support of an application for PEL:
 	
   (a) *Authentic*: Evidence presented must be truly the work of the applicant;
   (b) *Sufficient*: Evidence presented must show necessary breadth and depth of knowledge, skill and competence required for the learning outcome(s) or entry to a stage of a programme;
   (c) *Current*: Evidence and examples presented should be up to date and relevant to the current best practice in the discipline;
   (d) *Relevant*: Evidence submitted must be appropriate and relevant to the learning outcomes;
   (e) *Consistent*: Candidates must demonstrate that they have performed the tasks and used the knowledge and skills (associated with the learning outcomes) at the level required in a variety of situations over a period of time.
	DQAA	**Portfolio of evidence**
		As described

The assessment must ensure that the evidence presented has achieved an appropriate balance between the applied and the theoretical foundations of the module(s) for which exemptions are sought.	**PD**	
Conditions/ Recommendations Exemption/ advanced academic standing is awarded on the basis of the demonstrable achievement of the programme/ module learning outcomes. Where the Programme Director is of the view that these have not been fully achieved, he/she has the right to recommend that exemptions be granted with conditions / recommendations (*e.g. additional research/ assignment is carried out, attendance at specific workshops etc*.)		**Written PD recommendation reports**

Limitations for Prior Experiential Learning When PEL is accepted as the basis for granting an exemption on a programme of study, further application using the same learning for the granting of further exemptions in the same programme will **not** be considered. **Appeal Process** In common with any assessment process, the outcome of the RPL process may be subject to appeal. The applicant must clearly specify the ground of appeal, within 10 days of the notification of the original decision. This should be sent to the RPL Committee along with the appropriate fee. The decision of the Appeals Officer, which should be notified with 20 days, will be final.	**Applicant**	**Appeals Committee**

Policy Control Sheet

Policy	QA 3.6 Recognition of Prior Learning
Version	**4.0**
Adopted/Effective	July 2020
Supersedes	Version 3.0
Monitoring/Next Review Date	Yearly/July 2021
Responsible Officer(s) Designated Reviewer(s)	Head of Examinations and Registrations/ DQAA; Admissions
Scope	Quality/Admissions/Programme Management /Examinations Office

References

SNMCI Policy area	3) Programmes of Education and Training: QA Vol 2
Developed with reference to	Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher QQI *Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training* (Restated 2013) *Education and Training* (NQAI, 2005) QQI *Assessment and Standards* (Revised 2013) Recognition of Prior Learning – A Focus on Practice (EIE Project, 2009)
Related SNMCI Policies / Forms	FQA 3.6A RPL Application Form with guidelines; FQA 3.6 B RPL Learner Report

Revision

Revision Number	Revision Description	Originator	Approved By
3.0	Yearly. Version 2 expired Sep 2019.	Head of Examinations and Registrations/ DQAA/ Admissions	Academic Board
4.0/July 2020	General update based on application for Blended Status	Office of DQAA	