
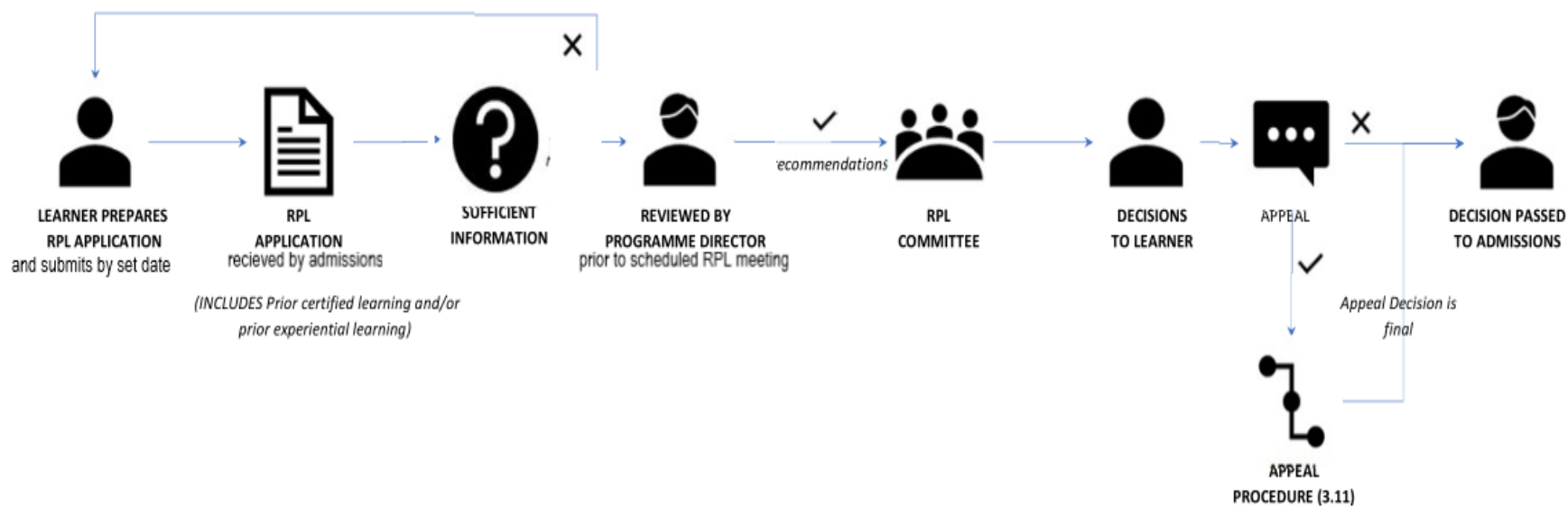


#	POLICY TITLE:	POLICY AREA:	VERSION:	DATE ADOPTED:
	<b>3.6 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING</b>	3) PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	5.0	July 2023



## Introduction and Context

The purpose of this document is to detail SNMCI's policy and procedures related to the recognition of prior learning, both accredited and experiential.

## Definitions

**Recognition of Prior Learning** - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a term used to denote an evaluation process, conducted by the College, designed to give value to all learning, both certified and experiential, for initial entry to, advanced entry to, or the awarding of modular exemptions on a programme of study.

Prior Learning can be recognised in two ways:

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** where an applicant has already achieved an accredited award for a formal programme of study. It is learning that has already been **accredited** by an awarding body e.g., Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) or other recognised awarding bodies, nationally or internationally.

It may entitle the applicant to:

- (a) Admission to a programme of study.
- (b) Advanced entry or academic standing.
- (c) Exemptions from individual modules on a programme of study.

**Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL):** where an applicant is seeking entry and/or exemptions through the presentation of a portfolio of evidence-based material, demonstrating acquisition of knowledge and/or skills, acquired through life, work experience, and study not supported by formal accreditation.

## RPL/RPEL and Accrediting Bodies:

Where programmes of the College may lead to particular destination awards on the NFQ, recognised by a professional regulatory body, e.g.,

- The Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI)
- The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI)
- The Qualifications Advisory Board for Early Years (QAB)

the College will contextualise its RPL and RPEL procedures to take into account the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for these awards.

## Principles and Policy

SNMCI applies the following principles to its RPL policy and process:

- RPL provides opportunities for access, transfer and progression in education and training, and gives value to all learning, both certified and experiential.
- Participation in the RPL process is a voluntary matter for the learner.
- RPL is embedded within the quality assurance procedures of SNMCI and maintains the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its awards.
- Processes and practices for RPL are clearly documented and are communicated openly and clearly to all participants in the process i.e., applicants, Programme Directors, lecturers, admissions staff, assessors etc.
- Assessment criteria, based on the learning outcomes of awards standards of knowledge, skill and competence as set out by QQI, are made explicit to applicants, and applied consistently and fairly.
- Assessment and verification mechanisms for RPL are appropriate and fit for purpose.
- RPL/RPEL processes take into account the criteria and guidelines attached to Professional Standards Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- Guidance 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.

#### **Guidelines:**

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 decisions related to RPL.

#### **Module**

- A module is a discreet unit of learning, integrated within itself, but also with other modules with a programme of study. Programmes in SNMCI are developed and validated on the basis of modules of 5 ECTS and multiples thereof, e.g., 5, 10, 15 ECTS, etc.
- Exemptions are only awarded for complete modules.
- Learners may apply for module exemptions, which if approved by the RPL Committee, will lead to a notation of EXEMPTION GRANTED on the broadsheets for stages **other than award stage** of a programme.
- 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.

#### **Assessment of RPL**

#### **Admission:**

- SNMCI must be satisfied that the evidence presented, during the RPL process, demonstrates the learning that has been achieved prior to admission.
- Where Certified Learning is the basis for RPL, the applicant is **required** to produce evidence of the certified learning. See procedure below.
- Where Experiential Learning is the basis for RPL, the applicant is **required** to produce 'evidence' to support their application. See procedure below.

**Note:** Credit for Experiential Learning is awarded on the basis of the 'demonstrable achievement of the learning outcomes' (not the experience).

All evidence submitted by an applicant to support their application for RPL, together with SNMCI's recommendations, must be kept for the normal period specified for retaining archived assessment documents.

#### **Fees**

There is a supplementary fee for processing applications for RPEL, which reflects the volume of work undertaken by SNMCI to support the learner in preparing the application and its subsequent assessment.

**See QA 3.9: Fees.** The fee for the processing of an RPEL application is determined by the CEO on an annual basis.

#### **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; RPL Committee; Programme Directors; DQAA;

	Person/s Responsible	Records generated to ensure evidence of follow through
<b>Procedure: Roles and Responsibilities:</b>  <b>Admissions Officer</b> (a) Assesses each admissions application (direct entry) to determine if the applicant meets the entry requirements for the relevant programme.	Admissions Officer	On-line application Data request if necessary



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(b) Sets the scheduled dates for RPL Committee Meetings in the Academic Calendar;</li> <li>(c) Notes, approves (or otherwise) recommendations made by PDs and DQAA in cases of Certified Prior Learning and Prior Experiential Learning;</li> <li>(d) Produces an RPL/RPEL report for each applicant reviewed;</li> <li>(e) Compiles annual report for Academic Board;</li> <li>(f) Conducts annual review of RPL policy;</li> </ul>	HoE Chair	Sets dates in Academic Calendar RPL Reports Annual Report
<p><b>Assessing Prior Certified Learning (PCL)</b> When assessing prior certified learning for entry and/or advanced academic standing or exemption(s), Programme Directors will base their recommendations on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) <b>Level of Prior Award on the NFQ:</b></li> <li>(b) <b>Comparison of Programme/ Module Learning Outcomes (PLOs/ MLOs):</b></li> <li>(c) <b>Currency of Prior Certified Learning:</b> The PCL must have been achieved in a comparatively appropriate time frame – for example within the last five years (<i>depending on the nature of the learning achieved</i>). 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 ELC has changed dramatically in recent times, while e.g., the core elements of sociology/psychology outcomes remain valid across a longer span. Applicants with qualification older than five years should have evidence of relevant recent work experience and CPD in the area to show that they have kept the qualification up to date.</li> </ul>	PDs	Transcripts Syllabi Assessment outlines Portfolios
<p><b>International Qualifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applicants seeking RPCL on the basis of foreign qualifications should supply a comparability statement from Qualifications Recognition (<a href="http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie">www.qualificationsrecognition.ie</a>).</li> <li>- This statement will indicate where certified awards sit on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).</li> <li>- All documentation supplied must be translated and stamped by a translation service.</li> <li>- The onus is on each international applicant to ensure that the information submitted is accurate.</li> </ul>	Applicant	Statement of comparability Officially translated documentation to include transcripts, Syllabi, assessment outlines
<p><b>Modular exemptions based on Certified Learning</b> This presumes that entry requirements have been met</p>		

<p>It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for the exemption in advance of the programme commencement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If an application for module exemption has been made (prior to the commencement of the programme) and a decision has not been received before the commencement of the programme, applicants <b>must continue to attend class</b> until written confirmation is received on whether the exemption is granted or not.</li> <li>- Where PCL grants module exemptions on a programme, the record for that learner should be noted on the exam broadsheet as an EX (Exemption Granted) for the module(s) in question.</li> <li>- PCL may not be applied for following the commencement of a module.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Applicant</b></p>	<p><b>Documented certified learning Transcripts</b></p> <p><b>Decision of the RPL Committee</b></p>
<p><b>Limitations for Prior Certified Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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 <b>not</b> be considered.</li> <li>- Due to implications for third party or other State/ professional bodies, e.g., Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) such as the Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI), the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) or the Qualifications Advisory Board for Early Years (QAB), entry criteria and/or extent of exemptions may be narrowed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>RPL Committee</b></p> <p><b>DQAA RPL Committee</b></p>	<p><b>PSRB Accrediting Body Guidelines</b></p>
<p><b>Conditions/ Recommendations</b></p> <p>Exemptions and/or advanced academic standing is awarded on the basis of the demonstrable achievement of the programme/ module learning outcomes.</p> <p>Where the Programme Director is of the view that stage or module exemptions have been substantially but not fully achieved, they may grant exemptions with conditions.</p> <p>These conditions <b>MUST</b> be limited, and only recommended where there is a small gap in learning to be bridged, to meet stage /module outcomes.</p> <p>Examples of conditions / recommendations include <i>additional research/ an assignment/attendance at specific workshops etc.</i> and are module specific.</p>	<p><b>RPL Committee</b></p> <p><b>PD</b></p> <p><b>DQAA</b></p> <p><b>Learner</b></p>	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p><b>Assessment briefs</b></p> <p><b>Documented Decision</b></p>
<p><b>Assessing Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)</b></p> <p>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, e.g., in the form of CPD. As a general principle, credit is given for learning, <i>not for experience per se</i>. The</p>		

<p>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.</p> <p><b>Portfolio of Evidence</b></p> <p>To achieve this, the applicant must submit evidence, which may include some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CV, outlining career, voluntary work etc.;</li> <li>- Job descriptions and experiences, verified by an employer;</li> <li>- References from current/previous employers;</li> <li>- Details of any 'on the job' training, supported by certificates for qualifications, training courses etc.;</li> <li>- Sample work such as drawings, minutes from meetings, plans, projects and other specific tasks undertaken in the workplace;</li> <li>- Published work;</li> <li>- Professional licenses/registrations or membership of professional organisations;</li> <li>- Acknowledged accomplishments;</li> <li>- Relevant recreational activities or hobbies;</li> </ul> <p>As part of the assessment, the PD/DQAA may also interview the applicant.</p>	<p><b>Applicant</b></p>	<p><b>Portfolio of evidence As described</b></p>
<p><b>Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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.</li> <li>- SNMCI supplies a 'point of contact' to support RPEL applications</li> <li>- There is a nominal processing fee applied to all RPEL applications which must be paid on submission of the portfolio</li> </ul>	<p><b>Applicant</b></p> <p><b>SNMCI</b></p> <p><b>Accounts</b></p>	<p><b>Application form and Portfolio of evidence</b></p> <p><b>Receipt of payment</b></p>
<p><b>Preparing a Portfolio of Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The portfolio of evidence is the key element in this process.</li> <li>- It should contain descriptive and reflective pieces, which give a clear indication of how the evidence meets either the entry requirements of a programme and/or the learning outcomes of any module for which exemption is sought.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Applicant</b></p>	



<p>- To facilitate its timely assessment, the evidence should be structured in a manner which illustrates the achievement of the learning outcome(s) in question.</p> <p><b>Programme Assessing Prior Experiential Learning</b>  When assessing prior experiential learning for entry and/or advanced academic standing or exemption(s), assessors (including DQAA) will base their recommendations on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) <i>Authentic</i>: Evidence presented must be truly the work of the applicant;</li> <li>(b) <i>Sufficient</i>: 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;</li> <li>(c) <i>Current</i>: Evidence and examples presented should be up to date and relevant to the current best practice in the discipline;</li> <li>(d) <i>Relevant</i>: Evidence submitted must be appropriate and relevant to the learning outcomes;</li> <li>(e) <i>Consistent</i>: 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.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>	<p><b>Assessors</b>  <b>DQAA</b>  <b>PD</b>  <b>RPL Com</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations of PD and DQAA</b></p> <p><b>Portfolio of evidence As described</b></p>
<p><b>Limitations for Prior Experiential Learning</b>  When Experiential Learning 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 <b>not</b> be considered.</p>	<p><b>RPL Committee</b></p>	<p><b>Prior Exemptions</b></p>
<p><b>Appeal Process</b>  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.</p> <p>The decision of the Appeals Committee, which should be issued within 20 days is final.</p>	<p><b>Learner</b></p> <p><b>RPL Comm</b>  <b>Appeals Comm</b></p>	<p><b>Appeals Committee Records</b></p>

**Policy Control Sheet**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>QA 3.6 Recognition of Prior Learning</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>5.0</b>
<b>Adopted/Effective</b>	June 2023
<b>Supersedes</b>	Version 4.0
<b>Monitoring/Next Review Date</b>	As required based on programme profile /Or 2025
<b>Responsible Officer(s) Designated Reviewer(s)</b>	Head of Examinations and Registrations/ DQAA/ Admissions
<b>Scope</b>	Admissions/Programme Management /Examinations Office

**References**

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

**Revision**

<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Revision Description</b>	<b>Originator</b>	<b>Approved By</b>
4.0 /2020	General update based on application for Blended Status	DQAA/ Admissions/ Head of Examinations and Registrations	Academic Board
5.0/June 2023	General update based on operation of RPL Policy in practice	Office of DQAA	Academic Board