



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

In fulfilment of its mission to transform lives and society, Dublin City University (DCU) will support and facilitate access to its programmes of study through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

RPL recognises the ongoing nature of education and the value of lifelong learning. It acknowledges the needs of society and the economy for a continually skilled, adaptable and well-educated workforce, as well as the desire of individuals to continue to learn and acquire additional qualifications, change career paths, and adapt to changing circumstances.

Definition of Prior Learning

Prior learning may be formal accredited learning and/or experiential or uncertified learning which includes the knowledge, skills and personal qualities acquired through life, work experience and study which are not formally attested.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to prospective applicants to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study at DCU seeking admission or advanced entry on the basis of prior learning. The policy encompasses the following: mature student entry, special case admissions, transfers, exemptions and advanced entry.¹

It can enable individuals to build on prior learning to achieve additional qualifications including Major, Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose awards at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

An applicant may provide evidence of prior learning through (i) demonstration of achievement of appropriate learning outcomes and (ii) appropriate level of prior qualification(s).

Where DCU programmes are also accredited by external professional organisations, it may not be possible to apply RPL in respect of those programmes.

¹ Please see <https://www.dcu.ie/registry/undergrad.shtml> for further information

Accredited Learning recognised by DCU

DCU will consider credits awarded by:

- i. Irish Higher Education and Further Education institutions whose awards have been aligned with the National Framework of Qualification at level 5 or above.
- ii. Credits from European Further and Higher Education Institutions where its National Framework has been aligned with the European and Bologna Frameworks.
- iii. Credits from Professional Bodies whose awards have been aligned with the Irish NFQ or other national frameworks which have been aligned with the European or Bologna Frameworks.

Recognition of Prior Learning Application Process

The extent of RPL is guided by regulations at University and programme levels. University regulations guiding the application of RPL are found in DCU Marks & Standards. The relevant extracts from DCU Marks & Standards are shown below:

2.4 Credits for DCU major, minor, special purposes, supplemental awards

2.4.1 For DCU MAJOR awards generally (provided the award is worth a minimum of 60 credits), prior learning in the form of ECTS credits achieved, where such learning supports the desired learning outcomes of the award concerned, and where a major award at the same level has not been conferred on the applicant by another institution on foot of those credits, will be recognised subject to a MINIMUM of 60 ECTS CREDITS AT THE LEVEL OF THE AWARD, excluding exempted modules, being taken at DCU. (Such DCU credits may be taken at DCU, at its linked colleges, or at an approved partner institution).

2.4.2 For MINOR, SPECIAL PURPOSE OR SUPPLEMENTAL DCU awards, prior learning in the form of ECTS credits achieved, where such learning supports the desired learning outcomes of the DCU award concerned, and where an award at the same level has not been conferred on the applicant by another institution on foot of those credits, will be recognised subject to a MINIMUM OF 50% of the CREDITS, excluding exempted modules, being taken at DCU. (Such DCU credits may be taken at DCU, at its linked colleges, or at an approved partner institution).

2.4.3 For any major award a minimum of 60 ECTS credits must be at the NFQ level of the award. If an award has 60 credits or fewer, all ECTS credits must be at the NFQ level of the award.

2.4.4 A student may not present the same ECTS credits as qualification for more than one DCU award. Similarly, a student may not claim exemption in respect of ECTS credits towards one award that have already been presented as qualification for another award.

2.5 Module exemptions and evaluation of prior learning

2.5.1 Module EXEMPTIONS may be awarded for prior learning; applications for exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with approved university procedures and subject to the minimums indicated at 2.4 above.

2.5.2 The evaluation of prior learning, whether in the form of experiential learning or of ECTS credits awarded, will be carried out in accordance with approved university entry mechanisms for the awards concerned.

Dublin City University Marks & Standards Version 2019.1

The application of RPL at programme level requires an alignment of prior learning with specific admission requirements and with programme learning outcomes in cases of advanced entry.

Decisions by programme boards in relation to admission or advanced entry are made on an individual basis and will consider prior accredited learning, and life and work experience that supports entry requirements and/or programme and module learning outcomes.

In the case of prior accredited learning programmes boards will consider the nature and content of any previous award and the learning outcomes achieved therein, the date obtained, and post-qualification work experience that supports the currency of those qualifications.

An applicant will be responsible for demonstrating achievement of required learning outcomes at the required level. The applicant must align prior qualifications with the relevant DCU Award Outcomes, especially where their prior qualification(s) predate the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

When allowing advanced standing (exemptions) for entry to a programme, the maximum credit exemption available will be in accordance with the regulations laid down by DCU's Marks and Standards. Exemptions are only granted at the point of admission; they may not be granted retrospectively. Double accreditation will not be permitted.

Dublin City University is not responsible and shall not be bound by errors in or omissions from this publication; the University reserves the right to revise, amend, alter or delete programmes of study and academic regulations at any time by giving such notice as may be determined by Academic Council in relation to any such change.

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