



# **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

## **Policy for Research Degrees**



## Policy for Research Programmes

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is inherent to DCU. RPL supports and facilitates access to DCU by recognising and rewarding prior learning. The DCU RPL policy is designed to be fair and transparent. It is intended to be consistently applied and to support and encourage lifelong learning and thus to contribute to the University's overall mission. The purpose of RPL is specifically to support students with diverse prior learning experiences who, based on this prior learning, are judged to be suitably prepared for postgraduate study and who can greatly benefit from such study. The Dublin City University Recognition of Prior Learning policy is available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/policies/policies-a-z>

Students are admitted to research programmes through recognition of prior accredited and experiential learning, or a combination of both. **Admission is to the research masters or professional doctorate register in the first instance.**

## Equivalence of Learning

Achievement of the following competencies / learning are required for entry to research programmes, equivalent to those achieved following successful completion of an honours undergraduate degree (equivalent to NFQ Level 8) or masters (NFQ Level 9), depending on the programme to which admission is being sought.

1. Discipline specific knowledge & know-how – detailed knowledge and understanding of one or more relevant specialised areas, and associated advanced skills and/or technical ability
2. Transferable skills – demonstrable examples of planning, leadership, teamwork, flexibility, project management, information & digital literacy, communication skills, and engagement
3. Basic research competency – appropriate foundation for undertaking research, e.g. evidence of inquiry, innovation, creativity, initiative, and problem-solving skills
4. Personal effectiveness – awareness of ethical and professional standards, evidence of self-management and reflection, and planning for continued career development

Applicants will also be expected to demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the nature of the work involved and commitment required for a research degree (NFQ Level 9 or 10).



## Application and Decision Processes

Applications are submitted to and evaluated at School level. The evaluation is carried out by academic colleagues independent of the applicant and research project (i.e. not the proposed supervisor) to avoid academics being placed in a conflicting advocate/evaluator role.

A competency- and learning-based interview will take place as part of the RPL application for research programmes. In order to demonstrate their achievement of the above learning / competencies, the applicant will generally be required to provide samples or examples of written work, activities etc. The portfolio is very important as a means of demonstrating prior learning. During the interview it will be made clear to candidates what is expected of them, given that they intend to enter a programme at Level 9/10.

Schools subsequently submit a report and recommendation for admission to the Faculty Research Committee (FRC) and, if approved at FRC a final decision on the offer of admission is noted at Graduate Research Studies Board. GRSB maintains oversight on implementation of this policy. In cases where there are conflicting recommendations from evaluators at School level, the FRC arbitrates.

## Timelines

As admission to most research awards continues all year, there is usually no specific closing date for receipt of RPL applications. Every effort will be made to ensure that applications are considered in a timely manner. Applicants will be notified quickly should the School evaluation not be favorable, and approval sought at the next available meeting of the FRC, should it be positive. Evaluation and approval may take up to 3 months, depending on the time of year.

A start date for an approved candidate is a matter for discussion between the supervisor and candidate, but is normally expected to be within 1 year of the application. In the case of a professional doctorate programme it will be the next date from which the programme is being run.

The Dublin City University Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) Application Form for Research Programmes may be found at: [https://www.dcu.ie/graduatestudies/A\\_Z-of-GSO-Policies.shtml](https://www.dcu.ie/graduatestudies/A_Z-of-GSO-Policies.shtml)

## Version Control

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End.