Policy Title:	Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
Description:	Policy to ensure that the assessment of prior learning is facilitated and approached in an equitable, transparent and consistent manner.
Author (Position):	Vice President (Academic Affairs) and Registrar
Version:	2.1
Approved By:	MIE Governing Body
Policy Approval Date:	June 2023
Date of Next Policy Review:	June 2027 (or as necessary)

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

1 Context

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) forms a critical component of European Union (EU) policy in relation to widening participation in higher education and supporting lifelong learning. Marino Institute of Education (MIE) is committed to ensuring that its RPL policy is compatible with its policies on access and progression[1] and that it meets current good practice in the field.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the assessment of prior learning is facilitated and approached in an equitable, transparent and consistent manner, whilst ensuring that decisions on recognition of prior learning uphold the ethos of MIE and the academic integrity of programmes of study validated by Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin (hereafter referred to as Trinity).

3 Benefits

This policy facilitates student access and mobility and thereby supports relevant national and EU policies on education and training.

4 Scope

4.1 The policy applies to prospective undergraduate and postgraduate applicants seeking to gain admission or advanced entry to MIE on the basis of prior learning.

4.2 It also applies to currently registered students who wish to apply for exemption from course work (credit exemption for RPL) already completed elsewhere.

4.3 Transfer between programmes for MIE registered students is out of scope of this policy. For details on this, please refer to MIE's Internal Transfer Policy.

5 Definitions

RPL is defined as a process by which prior learning is given a value (European Commission 2008; NQAI 2005: OECD 2004.). The focus of RPL is on the outcome of learning, rather than the experience of learning. It recognises learning that has taken place but has not

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[1] See Admission, Access and Transfer Policy and Academic Assessment and Academic Progression

necessarily been assessed or measured. Such prior learning may have been acquired through formal, informal or non-formal routes.

5.1 **Formal Learning**: Formal Learning takes place through programmes of education or training delivered by education and training providers. It refers to learning which has already attracted formal certification within an education system.

5.2 **Informal Learning**: Informal learning takes place through life and work experience. It may be also referred to as experiential learning. Often it is learning that is unintentional or unplanned and the learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to his or her knowledge, skills and competence. It may be assessed but does not result in formal certification of achieved learning.

5.3 **Non-Formal Learning**: Non-Formal Learning is learning which is acquired through planned activities (e.g. an extramural course), but does not result in a formal certification of achieved learning.

6 Principles

6.1 MIE is committed to providing recognition of formal, informal and non-formal learning for applicants seeking admission at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, where achievement for the relevant learning outcomes can be demonstrated.

6.2 RPL seeks to provide applicants with the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of learning whilst ensuring the rigour of MIE's academic standards, the integrity of the awards validated by Trinity, and consistency with the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

6.3 MIE endeavours to accommodate learner mobility through RPL as far as possible, but recognises that some programmes are not suited to admission via RPL and/or the granting of exemptions.

6.4 MIE's assessment mechanism and criteria in respect of RPL are fair and appropriate[2]. These are aligned with relevant module and programme learning outcomes.

6.5 MIE does not permit double counting of credits towards different academic awards.

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[2] See Equality Policy

6.6 MIE provides all stakeholders with clear information on the opportunities for RPL and on RPL procedures.

6.7 MIE will not put forward students to Trinity, for an award solely on the basis of RPL.

7 Policy

7.1 RPL may be considered for both undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

7.2 Formal, non-formal and informal learning achieved by the applicant will be equivalent to the learning outcomes or performance criteria set down for the course of study and will be supported by satisfactory evidence as required by MIE and the relevant Programme Board[3].

7.3 Applicants will demonstrate achievement of required learning outcomes at the prescribed level.

7.4 In courses where accreditation by an external professional body is necessary, recognition of formal, non-formal or informal prior learning may not be feasible or appropriate.

7.5 Where formal RPL is used for admission, the highest NFQ level achieved will normally be used upon graduation.

Maximum Credit Recognised by MIE for Admission

7.6 MIE may recognise formal, informal and non-formal prior learning for admission at undergraduate level.

7.7 MIE recognises 120 ECTS (or equivalent credit) in respect of undergraduate advanced entry admission at Level 8. Typically, this will require formal prior learning. These credits relate only to the first two years of study. Successful applicants will then complete at least two full academic years at MIE in order to be eligible for consideration for an undergraduate degree.

7.8 MIE may recognise formal, informal and non-formal prior learning for postgraduate admission at Level 9.

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[3] See Programme Boards Terms of Reference

7.9 When the duration of a full-time postgraduate programme is two years or more, MIE may recognise formal prior learning up to a maximum of 60 ECTS (or equivalent credit) or one year of study for advanced entry admission.

7.10 Although RPL applies to all courses, exemptions for course work previously done elsewhere will not be considered for courses that are of one-year (60 credits) in duration.

Credit Exemption (Post-Entry) for RPL

7.11 MIE does not grant module or credit exemptions to students after they have been admitted to a course.

Assessment Principles

7.12 In assessing evidence of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning, the following criteria will be considered:

   i. Relevance: The evidence will be relevant to the course of study and correspond to the learning outcomes of the module(s) and to the broader programme-level outcomes;

   ii. Level: The learning will be at the required level, i.e. it will map to the appropriate NFQ level descriptors;

   iii. Sufficiency: The evidence in support of RPL will support the claim that learning outcomes have been achieved;

   iv. Reliability: The evidence of prior learning will be reliable and it will be possible to verify that it is the learning of the applicant;

   v. Validity: The priory learning will match the required learning outcomes and will be demonstrated by valid mechanisms. These may include, but are not limited to assessment procedures;

   vi. Currency: The achieved prior learning will fit with current knowledge and practice.

7.13 Decisions on RPL will be made on review of the relevant applications and documentary evidence (as outlined in sections 7.14 and 7.15 below).

7.14 Suitable documentary evidence of formal learning includes; transcripts of results together with certificates of attendance/completion of courses, syllabi of courses, completed research reports and professional portfolios. Evidence of non-formal learning includes course descriptions and durations with certificates of attendance (a

certificate of attendance or participation does not constitute certification of achievement). Evidence of informal learning may include letters of reference/verification, work-based portfolios, plans, designs and reports.

7.15 The Course Leader or Programme Board[4] may use alternative/multiple assessment modes to determine whether or not the criteria (see above 7.10) have been met. Assessment methods may include written examinations, interview, viva voce, performance of a task reflecting an acquired competency, an essay or an assignment, or a portfolio.

Quality Assurance

7.16 The policies and procedures for the recognition of prior learning are embedded within MIE's quality assurance procedures.

7.17 **Roles and Responsibilities**

7.17.1 **Applicant**

a. The applicant will state the purpose for which RPL is being sought.

b. When applying for RPL either at the point of entry or post-entry (credit exemption for RPL), the applicant is responsible for all aspects of the applications as set down by the relevant course committee. In the case of applications for RPL following admission (e.g. credit exemption) all documentation, i.e., completed form and evidence, will be submitted to the Course Leader.

c. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that they adhere to all published deadlines for submission of the application and supporting document. Their attention is drawn to the assessment principles (see sections 7.10 to 7.15 when submitting an application.

7.17.2 **Course Leader and Academic Staff**

a. When the applicant is seeking RPL at the point of entry or post-entry, the Course Leader in conjunction with relevant academic colleagues who make up the Programme Board[4] will normally conduct the review of the application.

b. In cases where the applicant is seeking RPL at the point of entry, the Education Office, as appropriate, will communicate the recommendation of the course committee to the Dean of Education: Curriculum and Childhood or Dean of

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[4] See Programme Board Terms of Reference

Education: Policy, Practice and Society or their delegate for consideration and approval, as appropriate. The relevant Dean will communicate the decision to the Course Leader and the Registrar's Office.

   c. Decisions on RPL by the Dean of Education: Curriculum and Childhood or Dean of Education: Policy, Practice and Society or their delegate are final.

7.17.3 Registrar's Office

   a. The Admissions Officer is responsible for alerting the Course Leaders/Heads of Departments, as appropriate, to applications for RPL at the point of entry and forwarding all submitted documentation to the Education Office.

   b. Following assessment by the Programme Board[5] and approval by the Dean of Education: Curriculum and Childhood or Dean of Education: Policy, Practice and Society or their delegate, the Admissions Officer is responsible for making admissions offers to applicants seeking RPL at point of entry.

8 Responsibility

8.1 The Dean of Education: Curriculum and Childhood/Dean of Education: Policy, Practice and Society as appropriate

8.2 The Registrar's Office is responsible for data capture and document management.

9 Related Documents

9.1 Admission, Access and Transfer Policy

9.2 Academic Assessment and Academic Progression

9.3 MIE Internal Transfer Policy

9.4 §56 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

9.5 Programme Board Terms of Reference

9.6 MIE Equality Policy

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[5] See Programme Board Terms of Reference