National College of Ireland
Quality Assurance Handbook

6   Admission, Registration and Curriculum Policies

November 2018

6.1   Introduction

The purpose of this policy and the associated procedures outlined in this document is to provide concise and unambiguous information regarding how National College of Ireland (NCI) manages to maintain a diverse student body and the bases on which NCI makes decisions on admission to and continued registration on its programmes. This policy applies to all programmes at NCI, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, full-time or part-time. Programmes that deviate from the procedures outlined below will be indicated.

6.2   Admissions and Transfers

NCI welcomes applications from all suitably qualified persons who wish to study a programme of education and/or training. NCI programmes and services are designed and developed to enable:

- Transfer into the programme from cognate programmes, leading to awards at similar or higher levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and the extent to which the possibility of transfer with advanced standing might apply;
- Progression into the programme from cognate programmes leading to awards at lower levels of the NFQ;
- Transfer or progression from the programme into cognate programmes leading to awards at similar or higher levels of the NFQ;
- Learners with specific needs to access the programme; and
- Mature learners or learners from disadvantaged backgrounds access the programme

NCI recognises and provides support for those applicants who may not meet the minimum entry requirements but have knowledge or experience that has been gained from work, life or previous study. through the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (see Section 6.3 below).

International Applicants are considered on the basis of their academic achievements which are benchmarked using internationally recognised guidelines and on English language proficiency.

NCI may enter to agreements with other education providers, nationally and internationally to agree transfer or progression routes for their learners. This is described further in the Admission under Advanced Standing policy.

6.2.1 Entry Requirements

Minimum entry requirements for all NCI programmes are agreed as part of the validation of the programme. These entry requirements include minimum academic requirements, language proficiency requirements, minimum work or post-qualification experience or other additional requirements.

Applicants who do not meet the minimum entry requirements of a programme but who have significant relevant experience shall be guided to use the Recognition of Prior Learning policy in order to explore their application further.

Meeting the minimum entry requirements of a programme does not guarantee an offer of a place. Offers of a place shall be made subject to:

- Places being available on the programme;
- The College having sufficient resources to deliver the programme and support the applicant;
- The College being assured that the applicant can reasonably expect to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme

Please Note: a programme will only delivered if sufficient numbers register to the programme. This minimum number is indicated in the approved validation documents for each programme.

6.2.2 Information Available to Prospective Applicants and Applicants

Programme information shall be made available to prospective applicants to allow them to make an application to NCI. This information will include at least:

- Whether or not the programme leads to an award
- The name of the awarding body
- The title of the award and whether or not it is recognised on the NFQ.
- Minimum Entry requirements
- How to apply to the programme
- Details of the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) arrangements in place
- The fees applicable to the programme
- Indicative schedule of delivery

When an application is received, the application shall always be acknowledged and the applicant advised with an indicative timeline during which the process will take place.

6.2.3 Non-Standard Applications

Up to 20% of places on all full-time day courses are reserved for non-standard applicants, i.e. mature students, transfer students from Further Education (FE), etc. at the discretion of the College. Such applications must apply must be submitted directly to NCI before 31st July.

6.2.4 Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a supplementary admissions scheme for school-leavers with disabilities. DARE was established by a number of colleges and universities as clear evidence to ensure that school-leavers with a disclosed disability or learning difficulty are not negatively disadvantaged at the point of application to third level education. School-leavers who meet the eligibility criteria compete for a quota of places allocated to applicants on a reduced points basis in NCI. All applicants apply through the CAO and must meet the Irish Leaving Certificate (or equivalent), matriculation / minimum entry and subject requirements.

6.2.5   Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a third level admissions scheme for school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. HEAR was established by a number of Higher Education Institutions to ensure that school-leavers from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds are not negatively impacted in terms of educational achievement at school and progression to higher education. School-leavers who provide satisfactory evidence relating to their socio-economic circumstances and meet the Irish Leaving Certificate matriculation / minimum entry and subject requirements are eligible to compete for a quota of places allocated to applicants on a reduced points basis in NCI.

6.2.6   Use of Third-Parties to Process Applications

NCI may use third-parties to assist with the processing of enquiries and applications to NCI. These may be call-**centre providers, international education consultants ('agents'), employer** organisations where a programme is part or fully delivered in company, and consortium partners in the case of apprenticeship provision. These third-parties are selected using the due diligence procedures described in Chapter 3 (3.6.13). Agreements with third parties are reviewed annually. The role of these third parties is to provide prospective students with impartial and honest advice and guidance, to submit applications to NCI and, in the case of international students, provide visa support process. All admissions decisions are made by staff of NCI.

6.2.7   Admissions Screening

All applications are screened against the approved entry requirements for the programme. Offers of a place may be made on the strength of the application alone, or may be referred for consideration by the Programme Director who on review, may then recommend that an offer is made, request an interview or may reject the application.

The basis on which an offer is made is not recorded in most instances where entry requirements have been directly met or the course is ab initio with no particular academic requirements. The basis on which they are offered is implied insofar as they have received an offer. For applicants who were sent for review and are subsequently offered a place, that reason is recorded. Eligible Applications may be waitlisted where the number of places available have already been offered and/or accepted.

6.2.8   Interviews

Where an interview is required **relative to a candidate's application, the time**, date and location should be agreed and communicated to the candidate in advance by the Admissions Office. Interviews should be completed by two members of faculty, one of which should be the relevant Programme Director or a nominated equivalent. Interviews may take place in person where appropriate or otherwise electronic means, i.e. Skype, or using automated interview software.

Feedback and any decisions made relative to an interview must be recorded on the standard **'Applicant Interview Proforma'**, which must be attached and held with the original application. The proforma should be completed and signed by one of the interviewing members of faculty but should record the names of both attending interviewers.

6.2.9   Offer of a Place

Offers of a place are communicated by the Admissions Office via email. Offers may be made conditionally or unconditionally. In the case of the latter, conditions attached to the offer must be met prior to registration. Offers not accepted within the allocated time period, normally 10 working days, may be rescinded. Due regard shall be given the number of places offered and accepted when offers are made closer to the commencement of a programme to ensure all places are filled by the first day of term.

6.2.10 Appeals

Applicants may appeal a decision at any stage of the admissions to the Office of the Registrar. The following constitute grounds for appeal of an admissions decision:

1. The applicant believes there was an irregularity in the manner in which a query or an application for admission was considered, the applicant was interviewed or in which prior learning was evaluated.
2. **The applicant wishes to appeal against the College's admission criteria or RPL criteria.**
3. The applicant wishes to present additional documentation in support of his/her original admission or RPL application. In this case the applicant must also show good reason why such documentation could not have been made available previously.
4. The applicant wishes to appeal against the manner in which the admissions or RPL criteria were applied.
5. There is a breach of natural justice.

6.2.10.1 Process

An application for appeal must be made within 10 days of receipt of the decision. The applicant must use the Appeal Form and include:

- The name and address of the appellant.
- The claimed ground for appeal which shall be in accordance with section above.
- The rights of the appellant in relation to the appeal.
- The time limit within which the appeal must be made.

The appellant shall sign the Appeal Form to confirm that they are aware of and understand these rights and whether or not they have chosen to exercise the right of representation.

6.2.10.2 Desk-Based Review of Appeals

If an applicant enters an appeal, a desk review of the appeal is conducted to establish whether or not valid grounds for appeal exist. In the course of the desk-based review, an appeal may be found to be valid or rejected as invalid. If the appeal is rejected as invalid, the applicant is informed of the decision and of their right to appeal that decision. If the appeal is found to be valid or they decide to appeal the desk-based review, a preparatory meeting with the applicant outlining their rights is convened prior to the appeal hearing.

If an applicant appeals the decision of the desk-based review, a separate Appeal Board of three staff members is convened to hear the appeal of the desk-based review decision. If the Appeal Board appointed to review the decision of the desk-based review finds in favour of the applicant, their appeal shall continue as if the desk based review had found the appeal was valid.

6.2.10.3 Composition of the Appeal Board

A standing panel of members drawn from Academic Council and its sub-committees.
Members of the Appeal Board should be external to decision makers on the application under appeal.

6.2.10.4 Appeal Hearings

An Appeal Board must have a quorum of 3 and a record taken of proceedings. The applicant has a right to bring representation to the hearing and should be notified at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. The hearing will proceed if the applicant decides not to attend the hearing. The applicant will be notified of the outcome of the appeal within 5 days of the hearing.

6.2.11 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Admissions Officer	Supervises activities of the Admissions Office team
Admissions Officer (or nominee)	Acknowledges Application Screens Application Refers to Programme Director Schedules Interview Offers Place
Programme Director	Determines entry requirements (at validation) Determines wait-listing criteria Interviews applicant
Registrar	Determines programmes to be offered and number of places available as part of the Executive Group
Director International Development	Determines programmes to be offered and number of places available as part of the Executive Group Oversees recruitment activities of international office team and agents of NCI
Director Marketing and Recruitment	Determines programmes to be offered and number of places available as part of the Executive Group Oversees recruitment activities marketing and student recruitment team
Dean of School	Determines programmes to be offered and number of places available as part of the Executive Group

6.2.12 Review of Policy and Monitoring of Effectiveness

The Admissions, Transfer & Progression (ATP) policy and its associated procedures are reviewed every two years or as required as a result of quality assurance activities. Effectiveness will be monitored through:

1. Annual review of admissions process
2. Review of success of non-standard applicants in the first year of programme
3. Review of the degree of diversity of the student body
4. Analysis of complaints
5. Analysis of reasons for withdrawal

6.3   Recognition of Prior Learning

NCI greatly values the life, formal learning and workplace experiences of learners and aims to recognise the relevant knowledge previously gained in these contexts. This knowledge is evaluated by the College through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. Prior Learning can take place in three contexts:

- Formal learning
- Non-formal learning
- Informal learning

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism allows prospective/current students to have their previous formal learning considered where they have already been awarded certification for a formal programme taken at another institution or training organization. This prior learning can be recognised and may entitle the applicant to admission to a programme, exemptions from some parts of a programme or advanced academic standing within a programme.

The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) mechanism allows prospective/current students to have their previous non-formal and/or informal learning considered. This involves awarding of credit for learning that has not previously been academically accredited, such as learning that has been assessed but did not lead to formal certification, i.e. workplace training; or learning that is unintentional and not recognised as contributing specific skills and competencies, i.e. community outreach, volunteer experience. RPEL may be used as a supplement or alternative to formal learning for programme admission or module exemption. If successful, the applicant may be admitted to a programme and/or granted an exemption from a module or modules within a programme. RPEL is determined by a process of matching learning outcomes from formal courses with learning outcomes achieved by experience or other formal learning.

RPL is determined by a process of matching learning outcomes from formal courses with learning outcomes achieved by experience or other formal learning. It is the responsibility of RPL applicants to provide sufficient evidence to enable such a determination to be made. The implementation of the scheme is supported by Programme Directors, Programme Committees, Schools and the Admissions Office.

6.3.1 Overarching Principles
- Existing programmes, programme stages and modules have defined learning outcomes
- Existing programmes and modules have defined assessment strategies which outline the guidelines for RPL
- Assessment for RPL is governed by the assessment policies and regulations of the College and is therefore subject to the principles of external examination, peer review and second marking.
- Assessment for RPL will take place within the programme committee but will be subject to review and monitoring to ensure consistency. A quorum of 3 members of the programme committee should review this assessment.
- Assessment for RPL will be considered at assessment boards
- Selected staff have undertaken specialised training in these processes and will assist learners in the preparation of their portfolios and in the selection of courses.
- It is expected that employers will assist NCI staff in the Assessment/Evaluation processes and in the validation of portfolios via provision of reference or other methods as agreed with the learner at the beginning of the assessment process.
- Learners will require to be assisted by all involved, in articulating what they have learned – theory and practice – from their life/work experience and in clarifying their claims for creditable achievement.
- RPL will normally be considered for programmes of 60 credits or more. Programme Committees may recommend use of RPL for smaller volume programmes in the context of admission where the intended audience for the programme merits it.

6.3.2 Definition
Prior Experiential Learning or learning gained prior to enrolment on a course is defined as knowledge and skills acquired through life, work experience and study, not formally attested through formal certification. Experience is an input and learning outcomes are the result of a successful learning process. Therefore, academic credit can be awarded only for achievement of learning outcomes, not for experience per se. The achievement of these learning outcomes is dependent on the learner and the quality and duration of the experience; this can include

experience gained as a result of involvement in employment, community activity, home duties, sport and other life/work experience.

6.3.3   Eligibility

Credit for Prior Learning is intended for those who have undertaken formal study in equivalent modules or programmes and by successfully completing those modules are exempted from taking a stage or modules at NCI.

Credit for Prior Experiential Learning is intended for mature students who may or may not have had structured formal education but who have learned from their involvement in employment, community activities, home duties, sport etc. This learning when evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively might entitle them to credits, exemptions from a course of study or admission to a programme without having the formal academic entry requirements.

Such individuals might be in employment (including self-employed), unemployed, currently retired from employment or never have been in employment.

Please Note: Prior Experiential Learning is not to be confused with Concurrent Experiential Learning which is learning planned and structured into a course as a way of achieving certain of the learning outcomes for that course. A common form of Concurrent Experiential Learning would consist of a student being placed in employment in industry for a fixed number of weeks.

6.3.3.1   Quality of Learning

The criteria to be employed by academic staff when assessing prior experiential learning are of paramount importance in ensuring that adequacy and consistency of standards are maintained.

The learning should imply a conceptual as well as a practical grasp of the knowledge or competence required and be applicable outside the environment in which it was acquired. It must be emphasised that experience is not what is being evaluated but learning.

If credit is to be given to an applicant for prior experiential learning gained outside the College environment, the College must be satisfied that the applicant has already mastered learning outcomes of a subject or module on a particular course. Only those approved courses which have their individual subjects or modules described in terms of learning outcomes will be suitable for participation in this scheme.

For admission to a programme or exemption from a programme stage, the learner must clearly demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of the level prior to admission. E.g. admission to stage 2 of a 3 year honours degree (level 7 of the NFQ) in Business will require the learner to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes associated with a Level 6 Higher Certificate in Business Studies or equivalent. Therefore, the assessment that is set by the programme team, must refer to these learning outcomes. See appendix 1 for an example of how this might be expressed.

6.3.3.2   Quantity of Learning

To avoid fragmentation, applicants may gain only exemption from entire subjects on courses as **a result of assessed prior learning. The decision in relation to an applicant's eligibility for** exemption from an entire subject on the basis of Prior Experiential Learning, lies with the assessor(s).

However, assessors should use the guideline that an applicant must meet a minimum of half the learning outcomes of a particular subject in order to gain exemption from that subject. Normally applicants may not be exempted from more than half the subjects on a course. However, if a case arises where this may appear appropriate, the awarding body must be consulted in advance.

Where exemption is sought from a stage, learners should demonstrate that they have met the minimum stage learning outcomes as described in the programme validation document.

6.3.3.3   Assessors

Appropriate standards must be maintained throughout the process of the assessment of prior learning. In order to achieve these standards, the College will organize workshops on the assessment of Prior Experiential Learning and it is expected that only those academic staff who have participated in these workshops will be involved in the assessment process within the College

6.3.3.4   Criteria for Determining Learning

In assessing whether learning gained from experience matches learning outcomes for a particular subject, attention should be paid by assessors to the following criteria:

The appropriate balance between theory and practical application

A common issue that arises with traditional learners is that, although they may have scored highly on examinations which concentrate on the theoretical principles of a subject, they are weak when it comes to the application of these principles. On the other hand, the common issue **with experiential learners is that they can 'do' but because they have not really mastered the** general principles that underlie a subject they cannot discuss the concepts embodying those principles in an analytical way.

Therefore, assessors should ensure that applicants being considered for credit or exemption on the basis of their prior learning have achieved the appropriate balance between applied and theoretical learning that is appropriate to the subject.

6.3.3.5   Transferability of Learning

Learning acquired through prior experience must be transferable to contexts other than that of the learning environment within which it was acquired. For example, the subject Accountancy on a particular course might list learning outcomes requiring a student to understand a range of accounting methods using different computing applications. However, an employee in an accounting firm might know how to complete the accounts in that firm only, or when a particular software package is being used. In such a situation this individual would be required to acquire further knowledge and skills before exemption from the subject could be granted.

6.3.3.6   Academic Level of learning

When assessing learning gained from prior experience care should be taken to ensure that this learning is at the appropriate academic level.

6.3.3.7 Granting of Awards

If the learner is being admitted to the award stage of a programme or is being exempted from a module that contributes to the award classification of a programme, a grade or mark must be assigned to any prior learning in order for the learner to be eligible for an award other than at PASS. If a grade or mark cannot be assigned, the learner will be eligible for a PASS award only.

Sectoral Convention 5: on Post Award Achievement required for an additional major award at the same level

Subject to the following conditions, a graduate holding a higher education and training award may present for and, if successful, achieve a further major award at the same level within the same generic area of study but involving the attainment of new learning outcomes (i.e. post award achievement). If the area of specialisation of the post award achievement is not substantially different and/or if the associated credit is insufficient for the granting of a new major award, the applicant may be granted a minor, special purpose or supplemental award or a Single Subject Certificate (issued by a recognised institution of the Council or by QQI/HETAC). The following table sets out the minimum volume of newly certified learning required of a candidate seeking to qualify for an additional major award at the same level within the same generic area of study. Please note that repeating learning substantially equivalent to previously certified learning is not included in the calculation of post award credit in the following table.

6.3.3.8 Pass by Compensation

A learner who receives a module exemption is not eligible to be considered for pass by compensation.

6.3.4 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

6.3.4.1 Exemption

Credit for Prior Learning is intended for those who have undertaken formal study in equivalent modules or programmes and, by successfully completing those modules, are exempt from taking a stage or module(s) at NCI. For exemption from a stage or module, the learner must demonstrate achievement of the minimum learning outcomes for that stage or module, respectively.

In terms of granting awards, NCI adheres to Sectoral Convention 5: on Post Award Achievement Required for an Additional Major Award at the Same Level. Subject to the following conditions, a graduate holding a HET Award may present for and, if successful, achieve a further major award at the same level within the same generic area of study but involving the attainment of new learning outcomes (i.e. post award achievement). If the area of specialisation of the post award achievement is not substantially different and/or if the associated credit is insufficient for the granting of a new major award, the applicant may be granted a minor, special purpose or supplemental award or a Single Subject Certificate issued by a recognised institution or by QQI. Table 1 below sets out the minimum volume of newly certified learning required of a candidate seeking to qualify for an additional major award at the same level within the same generic area of study.

Award currently held	Additional award sought	Post award credit for newly certified learning
Higher Certificate	Higher Certificate	A minimum of 60 credits at level 6
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	Ordinary Bachelor Degree	A minimum of 60 credits at level 7
Honours Bachelor Degree	Honours Bachelor Degree	A minimum of 120 credits at least 60 of which are at level 8.
Master's Degree	Master's Degree	A complete programme

Table 1: Minimum Credits per HET Award

Please Note: Repeating learning substantially equivalent to previously certified learning is not included in the calculation of post award credit in the following table.

Please refer to Chapter 4 (Section 4.11.6) for further information on the RPL mechanism for exemption.

6.3.5   Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

6.3.5.1   Admission

RPEL for admission can be used to (i) satisfy entry requirements for a programme or (ii) for **partial entry. In the case of the former, an applicant's prior experiential learning can be** considered in the absence of them meeting a specific entry requirement, i.e. a Level 5 qualification. In the case of t**he latter, an applicant's experiential learning can be considered** where they have partially met a specific entry requirement, i.e. having obtained an Ordinary **Degree (Level 7) rather than the required Honours Degree (Level 8). In both cases, the applicant'**s prior learning must be documented in a portfolio document and will be reviewed and assessed in accordance with the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs), focusing on knowledge, skills and competence. For admission to a programme, the applicant must clearly demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of the award at the previous level prior to admission, i.e. an applicant to an Ordinary Degree (Level 7) programme would have to demonstrate the learning outcomes of a Higher Certificate (Level 6) equivalent.

The guidelines for assessing RPEL applications (see Appendix 1) provide further information on **how prior experiential learning is determined to demonstrate an applicant's ability to achieve** the MIPLOs.

6.3.5.2   Exemption

RPEL can be applied for to obtain an exemption from specific components of a programme, i.e. a subject and/or module; or to be given advanced academic standing in a programme, i.e. direct admission into Stage 2, a module or stage in a programme. In both cases, the appl**icant's prior** learning must be documented in a portfolio and will be reviewed and assessed according to the minimum intended learning outcomes of the module(s) or stage for which exemption is being applied for. An applicant must meet a minimum of half the learning outcomes of a particular subject in order to gain exemption from that subject and they may not be exempted from more than half the subjects on a course. The portfolio is a crucial document when applying for RPEL for exemptions from programme components that contribute toward the final award as such learning must be assessed. If the applicant is unable to produce a portfolio to substantiate their prior experiential learning, they will be required to complete an assessment designed to demonstrate achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. Please refer to Chapter 4 (Section 4.11.6) for further information on the RPL mechanism itself.

6.3.5.3   Setting RPEL Assessment

Procedure	Responsibility	Evidence

The programme team agrees at validation, the RPL assessment for each module and stage of the programme as appropriate: This assessment is set subject to the principles of assessment as set out in Chapter 4 of the QA handbook The assessment will have criteria for: • recognition of prior formal learning • Recognition of prior experiential learning	Programme Director with Programme Team	Validation Document Sample - Assessment
Assessment will be reviewed annually as part of the annual review process and amended as required as part of the overall module and programme assessment strategy. This will normally happen in June of the preceding academic year	Programme Director Module Owner	Annual Report

Application Procedure

Procedure	Responsibility	Evidence
Applicants for admission to, and/or exemption from subjects/courses on the grounds of prior learning should make their applications in the first instance to the programme director	Applicant	
In the case where application is based on formal learning, the applicant should include	Applicant	Applications for RPL

copies of the following: • Module descriptor of the module studied • Transcript of results The programme director should evaluate this request in conjunction with the programme team in the case of specialized subject knowledge being required The decision of the programme team should be noted on the application form The student record should then be updated, noting the exemption(s) granted	 Programme Director Admissions Officer / Programme Director Admissions Officer	
Schools should take account of the time needed for the evaluation of prior learning and for guidance for applicants in the applications process.		
All applicants seeking credit for Prior Experiential Learning should be interviewed by academic staff and assigned an academic advisor/mentor. This process has three main objectives: • To ensure that the applicant has selected the most suitable course for his/her needs. • To review the experience gained by the applicant so as to identify potentially creditable learning. • To advise the applicant on the preparation of a portfolio.	Admissions Officer	

The applicant should then be requested to produce, within an agreed period of time (typically three to four weeks), the portfolio describing the prior experience in the context of potentially creditable learning. Experience cited as undertaken while in employment should, where possible, be certified by the employer concerned.	Academic Advisor / RPEL Mentor	Letter outlining requirements
If the learner is unable to provide a portfolio of assessment, s/he will be requested to undertake the assessment associated with the module/programme.	Academic Advisor / RPEL Mentor	Assessment

Process of Evaluation

Procedure	Responsibility	Evidence
The portfolio, when received by the College, should be scrutinised by the assessor(s). This involves the identification and evaluation of prior learning encompassed in the portfolio. Tests or other assessment instruments appropriate to the applicant's needs may be used as required.	Assessor	Marking Scheme

Having evaluated the learning gained, the assessors must now match this learning with the learning outcomes of the subject(s) from which the applicant may be exempted. Except where exemption is being sought from the award stage of a programme, no grade or mark should be allocated to the exempted subjects as the applicant's performance in examinations will be determined only on the basis of marks gained in other subjects which are examined in the normal way. For QQI awards, if exemption is being sought for elements of an award stage, a mark must be assigned in order for the learner to achieve a honours classification.	Assessor and Second Marker	Evaluation form

The evidence provided will be read and analysed by the assessor (s) to check for evidence of the following: • Valid - Does the evidence meet all or part of the outcomes or assessment criteria? • Sufficient - Is the evidence sufficient proof of the outcomes or assessment criteria? • Current - Is the evidence recent. The College normally would expect that students experience or qualifications had been gained within the last 5 years? • Authentic - Is the evidence the students own work?	Assessor & Second marker	External examiner reports (QQI / HETAC) / External authenticator reports (QQI / FETAC)
All assessment under RPL for exemption/admission must be reviewed by the external examiner /external authenticator	Assessor / Examination Office	

6.4   General Application Process

6.4.1   Full-time Programmes

6.4.1.1   School Leavers and Further Education Applicants
Applications for full-time courses should be made to the Central Applications Office (CAO) before 1 February.

6.4.1.2   Mature Students and International Students
NCI is committed to providing equal access to education and equal opportunities for mature students. Applicants who are 23 years of age or older on 1st January can apply directly to NCI for entry to full-time education the following Autumn. There is no specific closing date, applications will be accepted up until 31st July or until all available places have been accepted.

International Students may apply directly to NCI, via an approved international agent or through a partner institution. Entry requirements are consistent across all regions.

6.4.2 Part-time Undergraduate, Professional and Postgraduate Taught Programmes

Applicants may apply directly to NCI for these programme. <u>Please Note</u>: some of these programmes may require an interview as part of the application process.

6.4.3 Postgraduate Research Programmes

Admission to postgraduate research programmes is subject to the admissions policies and procedures of Maynooth University. Please refer to Chapter 11 (Section 11.3) for further information about the collaborative partnership between NCI and Maynooth University for the delivery of postgraduate research programmes.

6.5 Deferred Entry

An applicant who has been offered a place may defer acceptance for one year under certain circumstances which are deemed appropriate by the College. Applications for deferrals will not be considered after the end of the first semester except in extenuating circumstances. In relation to deferred entry into full-time day programmes, the College operates a policy in common with other third level institutions.

International students are permitted one deferral. If they wish to further defer their place beyond this, they will have to reapply to the programme. Where an international student defers, there is an implication to their ability to apply and obtain a refund from the College.

6.6 Admissions under Advanced Standing

Advanced Standing is a term used to describe arrangements between NCI and another education provider where programmes offered by that provider are recognised to meet the entry requirements of NCI programmes. Applicants from institutions with an Advanced Standing or articulation agreement with NCI will not be required to be re-approved by the Programme Director. Advanced standing agreements may allow admission to any stage of a programme, subject to the sector conventions on award for credit.

This process includes arrangements with international Higher Education Institutes. Reference in these cases should be made to the [NARIC Ireland Foreign Qualifications Database](). The academic culture of a country will be taken into account, in particular the assessment system(s) and teaching methodologies in place, to ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged if admitted to NCI.

6.6.1 Consideration of the Proposal

The proposal for considering a course for advanced standing should be brought to the attention of the Programme Director of the admitting programme. This proposal may come from the Admissions Office, International Office, Marketing Department or Academic School.

The Programme Director will review the programme and provisionally decide if there is a sufficient fit with the admitting programme. In order to consider the proposal, the Programme Director must be in possession of a full set of programme documentation detailing learning outcomes of the programme and of the modules that form the programme. In the case of international education institutions, the Programme Director will work with the International Partnership Manager, who will initially undertake the mapping of the curriculum.

If the Programme Director considers that a sufficient fit does not exist between the programmes in question, they should consult with the Dean of School prior to rejecting it.

6.6.2   Approval of the Proposal

If a fit exists, a proposal to consider the programme for advanced standing will be considered by the Programme Committee. In the case of international education institutions, a proposal to consider the programme for advanced standing will be made to the Academic Operations Committee. It is suggested that this become a standing item on the agenda for programme committee meetings.

The School Committee will approve on the recommendation of the Programme Committee any proposal for admission by advanced standing. The Dean of School will report such approvals to Academic Council. The Registrar will advise the Higher Education Institute or educational organisation of all successful or rejected applications for admission through advanced standing. Such approvals will last for 5 years unless the Programme Committee choose to review it before this period elapses.

6.7   Programme Transfer

Applications to transfer from a NCI programme to another programme delivered by the College may be considered under certain conditions. These conditions specify that the learner normally has the entry requirements for the new programme and that the request is endorsed by the Programme Director(s) concerned. Learners considering applying for internal transfer should consult with their Programme Director. All applications for Internal Transfer should be directed to the Registrar. Learners must fill in application forms before 31st May annually.

Please Note: First year learners on full-time day courses may not transfer to another full-time day course. unless they meet the minimum entry requirements. This would be considered a repeat year and repeat fees would apply.

6.8   Group Elective or Elective Transfer

Students who wish to transfer to different group elective or individual elective modules after the period of elective choice has closed should first meet with their Programme Director. Transfer to an elective or group elective can occur only where the learner has met prerequisites for the elective being transferred to and where there are sufficient places on the elective modules. All applications must be directed to the Registrar.

6.9   Enrolment on Multiple Programmes

The College does not normally permit students to enrol on more than one programme. An application to enrol on more than one programme should be made to the Registrar. Consideration will be given to the volume of credit involved and to the circumstances of the student.

Under the rules of progression from one stage to another, students may carry up to 10 ECTS subject to the approval of the relevant Vice Dean. Students may not normally carry credit into an award year.

6.10 Withdrawals

Students who wish to withdraw must submit a Programme Withdrawal Form to the Office of the Registrar Office. The Students will not be considered to have withdrawn until a completed form has been received by the Registrar. Under these circumstances, fees cannot be refunded.

Students who have been found to be not engaged with their programme may be withdrawn according to the policy on learner attendance and engagement (see Section 6.11 below).

6.10.1 Fee Guidelines – Part-Time Learners

NCI operates a strict policy of non-refund of deposit/fees except where the College is not in a position to comply with its obligations to the students. Requests for refunds have to be addressed in writing to the Registrar.

In the case of international students, requests for refunds must be made directly to the International Director as a separate policy exists in line with national standards.

6.11 Policy on Learner Attendance and Engagement

NCI expects its learners to engage with and attend all learning activities and events associated with their course of study at the College. Student Engagement and Attendance data is captured and monitored for the following purposes:

- The early identification of at risk or habitual non-attenders. The College recognises the value of engagement monitoring to help identify students who may be in danger of leaving their course of study. Through early identification of such students, the College has the opportunity to proactively offer assistance and guidance to encourage progression and to avoid potential discontinuation;
- Meeting statutory requirements for receipt of funding under certain initiatives;
- Meeting its legal obligations for reporting to the Garda National Immigration Bureau for international students;
- Meeting the arrangements agreed with employers or other organisations for specific programme delivery;
- **Meeting the college's duty of care obligations under health and safety legislation**; and
- To inform physical resource planning.

In order to support these requirements, it is College policy that:

1. All learners must comply with attendance or engagement monitoring methods, such as swiping cards in classrooms, completing attendance lists or logging in to online learning events. Failure to do so is a breach of the Code of Discipline
2. Learners should not swipe in, sign in or log in on behalf of another student. To do so is a breach of the College Code of Discipline and Code of Practice for Academic Honesty (see Chapter 4 (Section 4.22.2.5).
3. Student engagement and attendance is monitored based on the attendance and engagement thresholds and re-engagement procedures outlined below.

6.11.1 Scope of the Policy

Due to the broader academic benefits of student engagement and attendance, and to ensure equality of treatment, the attendance and engagement of all students, regardless of immigration status or level of study, is captured through the mechanisms as described in this policy. This policy, therefore, applies equally to all students.

6.11.2 Definition of Attendance & Engagement

For the purpose of this policy, Student Engagement and Attendance means the attendance of a student across their respective classes and/or their engagement with College services and other activities. These include, but are not limited to, engagement with the following:

- Library Services
- Moodle / Virtual Learning Environment
- Turn It In
- Work Placement progress
- Coursework Submissions
- Attendance at examination
- Dissertation / Project Work
- Any other learning activity which the College may deem appropriate for inclusion.

6.11.3 Data Capture

All data captured for this purpose will be done so in accordance with current data protection legislation (see Chapter 9 (Section 9.6). The College expects its entire student population to attend all their respective timetabled classes. For the purposes of this policy, classes include lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops and critiques. The attendance of all students on taught programmes is monitored as follows:

- via class data terminals, located in each classroom, where students are expected to swipe into each class they attend;
- via logging into virtual classrooms; and
- via engaging with directed online learning

Other methods of attendance may be taken however they may not form part of the official record. The College also expects students to utilise and engage with all other services and portals relating to their coursework and learning objectives.

The threshold for this level of engagement will be relative to the class and the course requirements. The sources of data include but are not limited to:

- Library Activity
- Moodle / Virtual Learning Environment Activity
- Turn It In Activity
- Work Placement Activity
- Assignment Submissions
- Continuous Assessments
- Dissertation / Project Work
- Any other learning tool which the College may deem appropriate for inclusion.

The College reserves the right to utilise data from any learning source to assess the overall engagement of a student, combining data from in-class attendance to form a comprehensive view of the student's engagement.

6.11.4 Notifying an absence

All students are responsible for notifying the College of any absence from a scheduled teaching session, i.e. a lecture, seminar, tutorial, technical instruction, demonstration, presentation, group work, performance or any other timetabled activity. This can be done via the NCI360 portal. **It is the student's responsibility to notify the College of an absence or lateness.** Absences are defined as follows:

1. An explained absence due to pre-planned appointment. This should be notified in advance of the teaching session.
2. An explained absence due to an unexpected emergency which is notified after the event.
3. A long-term explained absence – due to an issue that may have a longer term impact on learning.
4. Unexplained absences which require intervention under this policy.

6.11.5 Data Access, Processing & Sharing

Data relating to attendance and engagement will be collected via the College's approved engagement monitoring system. This data can be viewed and interacted with on the following three levels:

6.11.5.1 Student View

Each student will have the ability to view any data relating to them and their level of engagement and attendance via the student portal. Students can view and request amendments to their records via this interface.

6.11.5.2 Staff View

Staff will have access to data relating to their own areas of responsibility; staff will have a level of editable access to make amendments to the records held on file. These staff may use the data held in the performance of their duties.

6.11.5.3 Administrative Access

Authorised Staff will have master access to the system to edit, change, alter or amend any/or all data held in the system. Systems administrators will coordinate the overall implementation of the SEAM system.

6.11.5.4 Data Analysis

Data relating to attendance and engagement can be analysed and reported on at an individual, module, and programme or school level by authorised Academic or Administrative Staff in the performance of their duties. It is possible that a student may be falling behind academically but is still engaged in their studies for attendance and engagement purposes and vice versa. Concerns about academic performance should be discussed through pre-existing mechanisms

6.11.5.5 Training

Anyone analysing data or making judgements according to the data must be trained to do so and understand the context of the programme/module being delivered.

6.11.5.6 Data Sharing

Personal data of learners may only be shared in accordance with current data protection legislation and in accordance with any agreements that the College has entered into or is statutorily bound by, i.e. sharing with HEA, Department of Social Protection, employers of a learner where the programme of study has been commissioned by the employer, employers of apprentices, etc.

6.11.6 Thresholds of Engagement

6.11.6.1 International Students

The College will start the Re-engagement process in three instances:

- A student misses ≥ 20%* of their scheduled teaching sessions on a module and has not notified the College or is persistently and excessively late:
- A student's level of engagement with other services relative to the class and the course requirements is below the standard that you would expect from students engaged in a programme of study; or
- Reports from a member of Academic, Administrative or Students Union staff that a student is not engaging with their respective programme of study or is at risk of disengaging.

6.11.6.2 First Year Undergraduate Learners (Full-Time)

The College will start the Re-engagement process in three instances:

- A student misses ≥20% of their scheduled teaching sessions on a module and has not notified the College or is persistently and excessively late.
- A student's level of engagement with other services relative to the class and the course requirements is below the standard that you would expect from students engaged in a programme of study.
- Reports from a member of Academic, Administrative or Students Union staff that a student is not engaging with their respective programme of study or is at risk of disengaging.

6.11.6.3 Apprentices

The College will start the Re-engagement process in three instances:

- A student misses any of their scheduled teaching sessions on a module and has not notified the College or is persistently and excessively late.
- A student's level of engagement with other services relative to the class and the course requirements is below the standard that you would expect from students engaged in a programme of study.
- Reports from a member of Academic, Administrative, Employer or Students Union staff that a student is not engaging with their respective programme of study or is at risk of disengaging.

6.11.6.4 Learners on Government Sponsored Programmes

The College will start the Re-engagement process in three instances:

- A student misses any of their scheduled teaching sessions on a module and has not notified the College or is persistently and excessively late.
- A student's level of engagement with other services relative to the class and the course requirements is below the standard that you would expect from students engaged in a programme of study.
- Reports from a member of Academic, Administrative or Students Union staff that a student is not engaging with their respective programme of study or is at risk of disengaging.

6.11.6.5 Learners on Programmes Commissioned by Employers

The College will start the Re-engagement process in three instances:

- A student misses any of their scheduled teaching sessions on a module and has not notified the College or is persistently and excessively late.
- A student's level of engagement with other services relative to the class and the course requirements is below the standard that you would expect from students engaged in a programme of study.
- Reports from a member of Academic, Administrative or Students Union staff that a student is not engaging with their respective programme of study or is at risk of disengaging.

6.11.7 Re-Engagement Process

For students who have disengaged with their studies, the College will begin a re-engagement process.

In the first instance, the Educational Engagement Officer (EEO) will make contact with the student via email, sms or phone to investigate the reason for their disengagement. It is expected that during this first process, students will highlight any difficulties they may be having engaging with their course and these can be dealt with through further meetings, referrals or supports. If students are not encountering difficulties, it is expected that they will make a full effort to re-engage with their course. Should a student not respond to contacts made by the College or if their overall engagement has failed to improve following initial communication, the Vice Dean **responsible for the student's programme will be notified.**

In week 4, all full-time students who have missed ≥ 50% of their classes will be requested to meet with their respective Vice Dean to discuss their poor attendance. In week 9, all full-time students who have missed ≥30% of their classes will requested to attend the same meeting. Any requested to attend such a meeting twice in a semester will be required to meet with the Dean of School.

At any stage in this process, the EEO, Programme Director or the Dean of the School may make an assessment that a student should be asked to enter into a Progression & Learning Agreement. This is an agreement between the College and student which outlines the students planned progression and re-engagement route.

6.11.8 Withdrawal

If a student continues to be disengaged with the programmes despite the above interventions, they may be referred to the Registrar for a decision as to whether it is appropriate to allow a student to continue on their programme of study.

Should a student fail to engage with the College, attend classes for a period of 4 or more weeks or undertake semester examinations, where no notice is given or alternative learning plans are **made, a "Progression Notice" will be issued.** A Progression Notice will request that the student make contact with the College within 10 working days to notify the College of their intentions to progress on their respective course. Failure to respond may result in the student being withdrawn from their course and relevant authorities notified.

6.11.9 Opt-Out

The College recognises the right of students to opt out of the re-engagement process.

6.12 Policy on Learners with Criminal Charges and Convictions

6.12.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to describe how NCI will administer and manage situations that may arise from an existing student who may be charged with an offence or acquires a criminal conviction during the course of their studies.

6.12.2 Scope

This policy relates to applicants to all NCI courses, to applicants on restricted programmes and initiatives, and to all students.

6.12.3 Policy

NCI (the "College") actively promotes equality of opportunity and is keen to encourage a diverse student population with a wide range of talents, backgrounds and experiences. Having a criminal conviction or charge will not necessarily prevent a student from completing a programme or taking part in an initiative, however, the College reserves the right to rescind the offer of a place or suspend a student where their previous criminal conviction makes it inappropriate for them to attend or continue to attend the College. A relevant criminal conviction or charge ("Relevant Criminal Conviction or Charge") of offence is:

- any conviction or charge in Ireland or abroad for an offence against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature (whether or not a custodial sentence was imposed in respect of such conviction); or
- any conviction or charge in Ireland or abroad for an offence involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the charge or conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking (whether or not a custodial sentence was imposed in respect of such conviction).

For the avoidance of doubt, a juvenile conviction or finding of guilt, i.e. one to which section 258 of the Children Act, 2001 applies, is not considered to be a Relevant Conviction or Charge in this case.

In reaching a decision regarding the continuance of a student with a Relevant Conviction or Charge, the College will balance the interests of the student, and its ability to provide any appropriate support arrangements, with its responsibilities to provide a safe and secure environment for its staff, students, visitors and others. In addition, the College may take into account the demands of various professional bodies and requirements under the law to protect special categories of people, for example children and vulnerable adults.

6.12.3.1 Applicants to Restricted Programmes

A number of the College's programmes and activities (See Appendix 1), especially in the areas of education and psychology, require students to undertake placements that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults and in which they will assume positions of trust. Having regard to the protection of the public, the College is committed to ensuring that only suitable candidates are allowed to undertake these programmes. In addition to other measures, the College uses the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) vetting service to assess the suitability of such students, and in some cases, may also require students to provide an enhanced disclosure by the completion of an affidavit. Therefore, offers on these programmes are conditional and could subsequently be withdrawn if applicants do not meet the Garda Vetting requirements of the College.

6.12.3.2 Students

A student must inform the College if they have been:

- convicted or charged in Ireland or abroad for an offence against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature (whether or not a custodial sentence was imposed in respect of such conviction); or
- convicted or charged in Ireland or abroad for an offence involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the charge or conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking (whether or not a custodial sentence was imposed in respect of such conviction).

If a student obtains a Relevant Conviction or Charge after admission, they must inform the College immediately. The College requests that any information on offences, or any disclosure documents, be sent under separate, confidential cover, to the Registrar, National College of Ireland, Mayor St, Dublin 1. This information will be only used for the purposes of investigating the issues and will only be seen by those whom the Registrar considers appropriate as part of this process and will be retained in accordance with the student records retention policy. Students are also entitled to access their personal data and to have any inaccurate, incomplete or misleading data amended or erased.

The College may require the student to provide information from other third parties who may have a view on the above matters. The parties may include probation officers and others who are professionally or personally involved in the rehabilitation of or familiar with the applicant.

Where a Relevant Conviction or Charge has been disclosed to the College by a student, the Relevant Conviction or Charge will be reviewed by those that the Registrar considers appropriate to make a decision on the continuation of registration of the student. They may go on to seek further background information on circumstances surrounding the Relevant Conviction. In particular, they may consider any or all of the following:

- whether the Relevant Conviction or Charge or other matter revealed is relevant to the programme on offer (including any secondments or placements);
- the seriousness of any offences;
- the number of any offences;
- the time elapsed since the offences;
- whether the offences show a pattern of behaviour that seems to be recurrent and ongoing;
- whether the offences involve violence or threats of violence;
- whether the circumstances surrounding the offences were unique;
- whether the applicant's circumstances have now changed; and
- what evidence the applicant produces to support the view that the applicant is likely/unlikely to re-offend again.

The College may also have regard to any representations made by or on behalf of the student. These representations may be given in person and./or in writing.

6.12.3.3 Referrals to Standing Committee

Where the College is made aware that a student has a Relevant Conviction or Charge, the College will request a meeting with the student. Where this is verified, the College will instigate review proceedings. With due regard for its responsibilities to provide a safe and secure environment for its staff, students, visitors and others, the College reserves the right to suspend or defer the place of a student who has been charged with a relevant offence until such time as proceedings are completed. With due regard for its responsibilities to provide a safe and secure environment for its staff, students, visitors and others, the College reserves the right to expel, suspend or defer a student who has been convicted of a relevant conviction or charge.

6.12.3.4 Failure to Disclose Criminal Charges or Convictions

NCI reserves the right terminate a student's registration if they are found at a later stage to have failed to disclose a criminal charge or conviction.

National College of Ireland

Recognition of Prior Learning
Assessor Guidelines 2018

NCI RPEL Team, 2018

National College of Ireland

Abstract

This document outlines the process of assessing RPEL applications in National College of Ireland.

Key Words: Domains of learning, Recognition of Prior Learning, Learning Outcomes, Portfolios,

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The concept of RPL can be traced back to the earliest guilds when master craftsmen inspected the work of apprentices in order to determine their competence against the high standards demanded of the different professions of the period.

This process was continued during the Industrial Revolution when the first formal apprentice programs were established and realistic workplaces created to train young men and women in the skills and knowledge required of their trade.

Today, RPL is an umbrella term that can include recognition of previous formal or informal learning.

The Three Domains of Learning and Lifelong Learning

The Commission of the European Communities (2000) suggest that prior learning encompasses:

1. *Formal learning* which takes place through programmes of study or training that are delivered by education or training providers, and which attract awards.

2. *Non-formal learning* that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal certification. Examples of non-formal learning include learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, in the voluntary sector, or in communities. (Examples can include Facebook Certificates or other internal training programmes).

3. *Informal learning* that takes place through life and work experience (experiential learning). It is learning that is quite unintentional and the learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to his or her knowledge, skills and competences.

Recognition of Prior Learning: Clarity of Terms

Formal learning can be considered under RPL in NCI**,** where an applicant has already been awarded certification for a formal programme taken at another institution or training organization - this prior learning can be recognised and may entitle the applicant to admission to a programme, exemptions from some parts of a programme or advanced academic standing within a programme.

Non formal and informal learning can also be considered under RPEL in NCI. This involves the awarding of credit for learning from experience, i.e. learning which has not previously been academically accredited. In this case, the candidate must prove that the required learning outcomes have been achieved. This proof can then be used to support a claim for admission, exemption or credit. As a general principle, credit is given for learning, not for experience per se.

How RPEL can be used in NCI

Use of RPEL to Satisfy Entry Requirements: It is reasonable to assume that there are potential students for many of our courses who, although not meeting the specific entry requirement (e.g. a level 5 qualification), have sufficient experience and competence to be successful learners. RPEL can be used to support entry for these students.

*Use of RPEL for Partial Entry***:** We need to distinguish between the full use of RPEL and the partial use of RPEL for entry requirements. For example, we often admit students to a course that requires an

honours degree (L8) where they only have a pass degree (L7). In this case RPEL may be used to fill the *qualification gap.*

Use of RPEL for Advanced Standing / Entry: In some cases, it may be justified to allow an applicant to enter on to the second year of a programme through either RPEL and/or Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL).

Exemption from modules: RPEL may also be used for **Exemption** from one or more modules in a programme.

Assessing an RPEL Application: Guiding Principles

When reviewing an RPEL portfolio, keep in mind the following principles:

Valid - does this material count, is it suitable? Does it meet all or part of the outcomes?
Authentic – is the evidence the applicant's own work?
Current – Is the experience / qualifications gained in the last 5 years?
Sufficient - is there enough evidence to support a case?

Note there are many forms of acceptable evidence such as example written reports, attendance at internal training events, website links that showcase competence, references from employers etc.,

Responses to Programme Learning Outcomes

There are typically three strands associated with Programme learning outcomes; *Knowledge, know- how and skills, Competence*. In an RPEL application, an applicant will respond to learning outcomes under these three broad headings.

(Note: in a module exemption application, the learning outcomes will be provided to students instead of the generic ones listed below).

Strand	Sub-strand	Description
Knowledge	Breadth	How extensive is the learner's knowledge?
	Kind	What nature or quality of knowing has the learner engaged in?
Know-How & Skill	Range	How extensive are the physical, intellectual, social and other skills demonstrated by the learner?
	Selectivity	How complicated are the problems that the learner can tackle using the skills acquired and how does a learner tackle them?
Competence	Context	In what contexts is a learner able to apply his / her knowledge and skills?
	Role	How much responsibility can the learner take, personally and in groups, for the application of his / her knowledge and skills?
	Learning to Learn	To what extent can the learner identify the gaps in his / her learning and take steps to fill those gaps?
	Insight	How far has the learner integrated the intellectual, emotional, physical and moral aspect of his / her learning into his / her self-identity and interaction with others?

(Table 1.1: NQAI Strands and sub-strands)
Assessing RPEL: General Principles & Practices

1. Check that the RPEL portfolio has been completed.
2. Check that there is some supporting evidence provided.
3. Ensure that the learning described is within the last 5 years.
4. Read each response to section 2 and judge whether the description and evidence sufficiently matches the requirement of the learning outcomes.
5. For entry, remember that applicant responses should reflect the appropriate level (5,6,7,8, 9).
6. For an exemption (Module level) remember that if the module is in an award year, it generally should have a mark in order to allow the student to achieve a possible honours in their programme. Therefore, as part of an exemption an assignment or competency test may also be implemented.
7. Check your entry requirements of your programme. If the course been applied for requires a specific qualification or experience in a specific area, then the portfolio must be aligned to that specific area.
8. Always get a second opinion on the RPEL submission from another member of the Programme team.

Assessing RPEL

The balance of "Can do" with theory and concepts

A common issue with some experiential learners is that they can 'do', but because they have not really mastered the general principles that underlie a subject, they cannot discuss the theory or principles that embody a task or function. Therefore, when assessing the RPEL portfolio, consider is there any reflection on theory as well as practice?

Transferability of learning

Learning acquired through prior experience must be transferable to contexts other than that of the learning environment within which it was acquired. For example, the subject Accountancy on a particular course might list learning outcomes requiring a student to understand a range of accounting methods using different computing applications. However, an employee in an accounting firm might know how to complete the accounts in that firm only, or when a particular software package is being used. In such a situation this individual would be required to acquire further learning. When assessing the RPEL portfolio, consider is the knowledge and skills transferable to other similar environments or is it dependent on localised systems?

RPEL Portfolio

RPEL Evidence can take many forms. The list below is to

- Example reports written
- Sample materials created
- Training Events attended

- Links to websites that showcase RPEL activities
- References from employers

RPEL Policy and Practices

Applicants may gain only exemption from entire subjects on courses as a result of assessed prior learning.

The decision in relation to an applicant's eligibility for exemption from an entire subject on the basis of Prior Experiential Learning, lies with the assessor(s).

However, assessors should use the guideline that an applicant must meet a minimum of half the learning outcomes of a particular subject in order to gain exemption from that subject.

Normally applicants may not be exempted from more than half the subjects on a course. However, if a case arises where this may appear appropriate, the awarding body must be consulted in advance.

Where exemption is sought from a stage/year, learners should demonstrate that they have met the minimum stage learning outcomes as described in the programme validation document.