RPL Matters in the DIT

POLICY and PRACTICE GUIDE for Staff

PART 2

(First draft)

August 2012

Focusing on:

1. Processing and Tracking RPL Module Exemptions in the EGB and Banner

2. Mechanisms for academic staff to achieve a specialist Bachelor award through RPL and real-time learning contracts

3. The Masters Qualifier

Anne Murphy & John Shaughnessy
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1. Introduction

This is RPL Guide Part 2 for DIT staff to augment the first Guide of 2010.

This second guide covers RPL practices not included in detail in the first guide. It concentrates on three particular areas of RPL practice:

1. Processing and tracking module exemptions/components and elements of modules achieved by RPL
2. Achieving a specialist bachelor award through RPL and real-time learning contracts.
3. The Masters Qualifier.

The table of contents of the first guide is included in this second guide for user information.

The forms and templates in this second guide were generated in consultation with a range of academic and administrative staff of the Institute. They are for guidance only and are not obligatory. Academic staff are free to adapt them for local use and indeed to generate more appropriate documents, provided any practices are within the RPL policy agreed by Academic Council in 2008.

The documents and guidance in both RPL guides are based on agreed RPL policy and on the revised Quality Enhancement Handbook and the General Assessment Regulations current in August 2012.

Both Guides are available on the RPL webpage of the staff intranet in PDF and Word formats.

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Learning Development & RPL Officer

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Student Services Office

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2. **RPL Guide for staff 2010 Edition – Table of Contents**

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<td></td>
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</table>
3. **RPL tracking in-a-nutshell**

RPL is used for the following purposes in the DIT: initial entry; advanced entry; transfer; progression; exemption from elements/components of a programme; towards achievement of a full award.

In the past it was difficult to ‘quantify’ RPL ‘activity’ unless all these purposes are considered numerically and reports run from student registration records and examination broadsheets. But we are now required to change that.

RPL for **initial entry** includes access to first year undergraduate programmes under the various non-standard routes, and to part-time programmes. These figures can be accessed and are quantifiable in % of student intake to both full-time and part-time programmes.

**Entry to postgraduate programmes** through the ‘exceptional case’ route could be considered RPL. Numbers of such cases are generally recorded and applicants tracked. While recording and evaluating the latter was a discrete activity at central level in the past it is now delegated to Schools and statistics are less readily available. However, the staff of Graduate Admissions record the number of applications that are regarded as non-standard as well as the number who achieve and accept a place on a programme. In the past audits indicated that ‘non-standard entry’ students who complete their programmes did marginally or significantly better than the general cohort – a common finding nationally and internationally.

RPL (both APCL and APEL) for **module exemption** operates at programme level and is usually noted on the student record. There was no obligation on academic staff or administrators heretofore to record such exemptions as a discrete action but recent recording of module exemptions with an EX is now making tracking a little easier. However, tracking has been requested by the NQAI as a recommendation arising from the 2011 Quality Review. Thus the emphasis on recording and tracking RPL activity through the EGB and Banner is in this guide.

**RPL towards a full award** is now a growing feature of DIT activities, mostly for **cohorts** of learners such as recent cases for professional journalist and for architectural technologists who had a previous DIT award of a lesser level and now can achieve a Level 8 honours bachelor award. The DIT is now processing **individual cases** of former registered DIT students who did not complete their award and now wish to do so by RPL and learning contract.

**Enquiries** about RPL from the public come to a range of DIT staff and there is no obligation on staff to record instances centrally. Likewise enquiries at open days and fairs show an increased awareness of the potential of RPL.

Perhaps the most significant application of RPL in the DIT had been in the **Labour Market Activation/Springboard** initiatives 1, 2, 3 and 4 where RPL is a recommended feature for advanced entry, up-skilling, re-skilling or **conversion** programmes. These initiatives have greatly increased public and internal awareness of RPL. If these programmes are included in instances of RPL, then the number of ‘applications’ is quite considerable.
4. Processing and Tracking RPL module exemptions and exemptions from elements/components of modules

4.1 Flowchart for the module exemption at programme level

The flowchart on the next page offers an overview of the twenty micro-stages in processing an application for a module exemption from start to finish.

The newly developed RPL Module Exemption Forms 1-7 which are included in this Guide are indicated in the flowchart as they apply in the process.

Many DIT programmes already have processes in place quite similar to that described in the flowchart.

Likewise many Departments and Schools have already developed systems and procedures for approval and recording of module exemptions broadly as indicated in the flowchart.

Programme teams now starting to develop module exemption processing and tracking systems may find the flowchart useful as a starting point for local practice.

2. Student decides not to apply for exemptions.

3. Student seeks initial advice from the designated member of the programme team to estimate the potential for exemptions.

4. Student decides not to apply for exemptions.

5. 1 individual or group advisory session offered to support student in preparation of an application for a module exemption/s.

6. Insufficient evidence

7. Student advised to take the module

8. Student decides not to proceed

9. Application/s compiled and submitted to Programme Team

10. Applications assessed by programme team

11. Possible External advice

12. Applications assessed by programme team

13. Interview if required

14. Outcome report of assessment sent to student by programme

15. ‘Topping-up’ studies advised such as attending the class sessions or reading particular texts.

16. Appeal Process

17. Insufficient evidence

18. Re-submission

19. Applicant confirms acceptance of RPL exemptions/credits in writing

20. Exemption/s recorded on student record/EGB/BANNER/Diploma Supplement. Exemptions report made available by the student to Fees Office in cases where module fee refunds/discounts apply. Exemptions reports retrieved for RPL tracking purposes at School, College and Institute levels.

RPL Mod. EX Form 1

RPL Mod. EX Form 2

RPL Mod. EX Form 3

RPL Mod. EX Form 4

RPL Mod. EX Form 5

RPL Mod. EX Form 6

RPL Mod. EX Form 7
4.2 Generic RPL module exemption forms

Seven generic forms/templates have been generated to assist staff in processing, recording and tracking module exemptions and exemption from elements of a module based on RPL. Those seven forms/templates are numbered and explained below with samples following directly afterwards.

RPL Mod. Ex. Form 1: Guidance for students
This generic text in this form can be altered or augmented for Student’s Programme Handbook and for general information at student induction sessions. This may be the first time students become aware of the possibilities of RPL for module exemption on their programme and it is advised that information is accurate on a year-by-year basis.

RPL Mod. Ex. Form 2: Application for a full module exemption
This form is used to apply for RPL for a module exemption. Should an exemption be granted, a copy of this form may be submitted by academic staff to the local Examination Office where the exemption is recorded on the student’s Academic History Record.

RPL Mod. Ex. Form 3: Application for exemption from an element/component of a module (partial exemption)
This form is used by students to apply for exemption from an element/component of a module based on achieving the learning outcomes from that element by RPL. A student may submit forms 2 and 3 concurrently in relation to two separate modules. The process of recording a partial exemption in the EGB and Banner is explained further on in this chapter.

RPL Mod. Ex Form 4: Assessment report
This form is used by academic assessors to formalise the process of considering an application for a module exemption. It provides a degree of transparency and consistency by setting out clear assessment criteria and a recording system. The student may have access to the completed form in the event of an appeal of a decision not to grant an exemption.

RPL Mod. Ex. Form 5: Report to student
It is best practice to provide a student with a clear report on the outcome of an application for a module exemption: thus this report form.

RPL Mod. Ex. Form 6: Appeal report
A student may appeal a decision about granting a module exemption once only – on the basis that evidence not available in the first application became available in the interim – as outlined in the RPL Policy document 2008.

RPL Mod. Ex. Form 7: Application for fee refund
In accordance with Institute fees policy, an agreed level of module fee refunds may be available on particular programmes based on module exemptions. Individual programmes should inform students of the possibility or not of receiving fee refunds before advising students to apply for a refund.
GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Applications for MODULE EXEMPTION or exemption from an ELEMENT of a module through recognition of prior learning (RPL)

For academic year _____ /____

School of _____________________  Department of _____________________

PROGRAMME TITLE & CODE: ___________________________________________

1. TERMS EXPLAINED

RPL is recognition of prior learning

- **Prior learning** is basically learning achieved before registering on a programme.
- **Certificated/certified learning** refers to formal learning that was assessed and awarded a certificate/parchment and examination transcript.
- **Work-related or experiential learning** is basically learning that was achieved through work training, work practices and/or independent study and that was not formally assessed or certificated.
- **Module Exemption** is the term used when a student, who can provide appropriate evidence of having already achieved the module learning outcomes, is permitted to achieve the module credits but is not required to attend the module sessions or to be assessed in the normal way.
- **ECTS credits** are the figures used to describe the learning effort of a module and the overall effort for an award e.g. modules are normally worth 5 or 10 ECTS credits each. Programme award credits can vary depending on the length of the programme e.g. a bachelor degree is normally between 180 and 240 credits. A Masters award is usually worth 60 ECTS credits. The approved number of credits for a programme must be achieved by a student before the award can be granted. Credits achieved through RPL contribute to the award total in terms of credits. However, RPL credits rarely have marks attached and therefore may not contribute to the overall grade/classification of an award.

2. MODULE EXEMPTIONS AVAILABLE

On the BSc. in ______________ the following 2/3/4/5 modules ONLY may be achieved on the basis of evidenced prior learning of the appropriate level and content in relation to the module learning outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module title</th>
<th>CRN</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
<th>Stage of the programme</th>
<th>Types of evidence of prior learning than will be considered for exemption purposes, and/or means of assessment used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Certificated learning (list of possible awards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Work-related learning/experiential learning (types)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment task set for exemption from this module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ideally the information in these boxes should align with the text in the module descriptor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Exemptions are normally available only for FULL modules – not for elements/components of modules – but there are programmes where partial exemptions are normal practice.
3. STEPS TO TAKE IN PREPARATION FOR AN APPLICATION FOR A MODULE EXEMPTION

a. Carefully consider the learning outcomes for each module for which you may be claiming an exemption in the current academic year, referring only to the list of modules achievable through RPL. These learning outcomes will be included in your Student Programme Handbook.

b. Carefully consider if you could provide evidence of having achieved the learning outcomes already. Make an initial list of the documents and other evidence you can provide.

c. Carefully consider if you are prepared to take a performance test/examination/interview to provide evidence of having achieved the module learning outcomes.

d. Carefully consider if you are willing to accept a module exemption with credits only and without grades if it is likely to impact on your overall examination results and award classification.

e. Carefully consider the advantage to you of achieving a module exemption relative to attending the module, participating in module activities and being assessed in the normal way.

If you decide to go ahead with an application for module exemptions, complete the application form for each module you are wishing to get an exemption for. The form to use is the Application and Approval form - RPL F2. Then make an appointment with the Programme co-ordinator or Year Tutor to get advice about the formal RPL process for module exemptions and your general chances of achieving an exemption. You are entitled to a minimum of one individual advisory session of no more than one hour per module/group of modules for the purpose of determining if a full application is worthwhile based on your evidence of prior learning. Group advisory sessions may be organised for your programme. Webcourses for your programme will be used to make information available.

It is important to remember that you, the applicant, are responsible for preparation of a claim for module exemption. While general guidelines and advice will be given, academic staff may not give students unreasonable assistance with preparation of RPL evidence. An applicant cannot be advised in advance if a claim for an exemption will be successful since all applications are assessed by the appropriate members of the Programme team and approved at Department and School levels as is practice for all assessments leading to credits and to DIT awards. Therefore, all students who apply for module exemptions are obliged to attend and participate in module activities until they have been formally notified of approval of module exemptions.

If you decide to go ahead with your application/s for module exemption/s you should carefully note the deadlines for submission of applications and the format for submission of evidence of prior learning.

Deadlines for submission, application forms and guidelines for the format of submissions will be available on Webcourses for your programme.

A sample module self-assessment template is provided below to help you decide if you have sufficient prior learning to apply for a module exemption or not.
EXAMPLE of RPL Initial Self-Assessment Exercise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIT Programme using this module</th>
<th>Multiple usages across programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module Title</td>
<td>Introduction to Business Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module Level</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTS credits (5 credits = 100 hours notional learning effort)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select the self-assessment responses that best match your prior learning in relation to the 7 learning outcomes below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>I have learned this through my former studies or working career and can provide paper evidence/documents/certificates</th>
<th>I know most of this but I have no paper evidence</th>
<th>I am willing to complete a task/assignment to show I have learned this</th>
<th>I really need to take the module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On completion of this module the learner should be able to…</td>
<td>1. Explain the importance of financial management within a business environment</td>
<td>2. Record basis business transactions and produce final accounts</td>
<td>3. Evaluate accounts within the context of performance evaluation</td>
<td>4. Describe the relationship between costing, pricing, cash and profit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of RPL evidence you might consider for this module: your CV, job descriptions, work responsibilities in relation to the outcomes, training courses attended, certificates gained, awards, reports you produced yourself or with others, letters of commendation, examples of documents produced/completed, etc.

Sample task/assignment to show prior learning in relation to the 7 learning outcomes for the module.

Write and submit a 1,000 word report under the following headings within the timescale agreed:

Report Title: The Key Elements of Business Finance

Recommended headings/sections:
1. The importance of good financial management in a small/medium enterprise
2. How best to manage cash flow, overheads and investment of profits
3. How best to monitor finances on a day-to-day basis
4. How best to maintain competitiveness through knowledge of investment opportunities.

Format of the Report:
Font: Times New Roman
Spacing: 1.5 line spacing
Pagination: Page numbers at foot and centred
Printing: One side only
Cover page: Author’s name, Date, Programme and Module concerned for RPL purposes
Page header: As details on cover page
Paper: White
Binding: No binding required: Staple at top left-hand corner only.
APPLICATION & APPROVAL FORM FOR MODULE EXEMPTION/S

Academic year ______ / ____

PROGRAMME TITLE: ________________________________ CODE: __________

Programme Co-ordinator: __________________________ email: ____________________

STUDENT NAME: ____________________________ STUDENT NUMBER: __________

Telephone number: ____________________ Student email address: __________________

Signature of Applicant: ______________________ Date of submission: ______________

PROGRAMME MODULES CONCERNED FOR EXEMPTION/S

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module title</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
<th>Stage/semester of the programme</th>
<th>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY OUTCOME OF APPLICATION for academic record and Fees Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exemption Approved □ DATE Not approved □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exemption Approved □ DATE Not approved □</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exemption Approved □ DATE Not approved □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exemption Approved □ DATE Not approved □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicants should attach to this application form evidence of prior learning for each module using the guidelines and formats outlined in the Student Handbook for the programme available on Webcourses at:

Signatures of Course Board members approving the exemptions for the student record

Programme Co-ordinator: ___________________________ Programme Chair: ___________________________

Date____________________ Date____________________

Assistant/Head of Department: ______________________ Head of School: ___________________________

Date____________________ Date____________________
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION from an ELEMENT/COMPONENT OF A MODULE

Note: Partial exemption from an element of a module does not qualify for a fee refund/discount.

ACADEMIC SESSION _______ / ______

PROGRAMME TITLE: ________________________________________ CODE: ___________

STUDENT NAME: __________________________________________ STUDENT NUMBER: __________

Signature of Applicant: __________________________ Date of submission: ________________

MODULE ELEMENT INFORMATION

a. Student should indicate the precise element of a programme modules from which he/she is seeking exemption from an element.

b. Programme staff should confirm the outcome of the student’s application for exemption from an element of a programme module and make this information known to Examinations Office by handing in this duly completed and signed form. A copy of the form should be maintained locally for Examination Boards together with the evidence provided to support the exemption from the module element.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme module concerned</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
<th>CRN</th>
<th>OUTCOME OF APPLICATION for academic record and Fees Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Element of the module concerned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exemption Approved □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not approved □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approved by:

Module assessor: Date:

Programme Chair: Date:

Head of School: Date:

---

**RECEIPT by Examinations Office**

Signature: Date:
RPL MODULE EXEMPTION ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAMME TITLE: ___________________________ CODE: __________
Module Title concerned: ___________________________ CODE: ___________
Element of the Module concerned: ___________________________

STUDENT NAME: ___________________________ STUDENT NUMBER: ___________
Telephone number: ___________________________ DIT email address: ___________________________

Assessment criteria: The criteria for assessing prior learning – whether it is formal, certificated learning, or non-formal/ work-related learning– in relation to a receiving programme, generally seek to establish if a good match is evident between the applicant’s prior learning and the learning of the receiving programme. In considering a good match between an applicant’s prior learning and the learning outcomes of a particular programme module for module exemption purposes, the criteria below for assessing evidence of both formal, certificated learning (APCL) and for experiential, non-formal, work-related learning (APEL) are generally used across higher education.

APCL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (for certificated learning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>Good match</th>
<th>Poor match</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume in years</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume in credits</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level/depth</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning outcomes</td>
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<td>Reading lists</td>
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<td>Thesis, project or major products</td>
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<td>Examination papers</td>
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APEL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (for experiential learning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>Good match</th>
<th>Poor match</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to the module LOs</td>
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<td>Currency/recency of the learning (kept up-to-date)</td>
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<td>Sufficiency to cover the module LOs to the extent and depth required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of the learning in relation to NQF descriptors for the module level is similar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authenticity: genuinely the evidence of learning of the applicant</td>
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</table>

OVERALL ASSESSMENT RESULT

| Module exemption approved | | Exemption from the Module element approved |

Module exemption/element refused

Recommended action

- Exemption Interview required
- Additional evidence to be supplied
- Challenge test or performance required
- Student should take the full module

MODULE ASSESSORS:

1. ___________________________ Date: _________________
2. ___________________________

Original to be retained for local records. Copy to be attached to exemption application documentation.
REPORT TO STUDENT

in relation to Application for MODULE EXEMPTION
academic year ________ / _____

PROGRAMME TITLE: ___________________________________________ CODE: __________

(Programme Co-ordinator: email: Phone: )

STUDENT NAME: ................................................ STUDENT NUMBER: ...........................

Telephone number: ........................................ DIT email address: ...................................................

_________________________ _______________________

Date: ___________ Date: ___________

_________________________

Date: ___________

_________________________

CRN:

Exemption approved ☐
Actions required (if any)

Application rejected ☐
Reasons for rejection

Action required (if any)

Signatures:
Modu le Assessor/s: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________

Programme Chair: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________

Head of School: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________
REPORT TO STUDENT - Appeal

in relation to APPEAL of
Application Rejection for MODULE EXEMPTION
academic year ________ / _____

PROGRAMME TITLE: _________________________________________ CODE: __________

(Programme Co-ordinator: email: Phone: )

STUDENT NAME: .............................................................. STUDENT NUMBER: ................................

Telephone number: ............................................. DIT email address: .........................................................

---

MODULE TITLE CRN:

Exemption approved following APPEAL □
Actions required (if any)

Application rejected following APPEAL □
Reasons for rejection of Appeal

Action required (if any)

---

Signatures:
Module Assessor/s: ________________________________ Date: __________
Programme Chair: ________________________________ Date: __________
Head of School: ________________________________ Date: __________
APPLICATION FORM FOR FULL MODULE EXEMPTION/S and FEE REFUNDS/DISCOUNTS

Students should note the important terms and conditions below with regard to module exemption fee refund/discount policy:
1. Fee exemption refunds do NOT apply to all programmes. Please check with your Programme if fee refunds/discounts for module exemptions refund/discounts apply.
2. Students must register for a module to receive a fee refund/discount on a module based on exemption.
3. Partial exemption from an element of a module does not qualify for a refund/discount.
4. The maximum refund/discount that is permitted per module is 50% of the module fee.
5. The maximum refund/discount permitted is 25% of the full tuition fee in an academic year regardless of the number of module exemptions approved for ECTS credit accumulation purposes for that year.
6. Refunds/Discounts do not apply to the student contribution charge.

ACADEMIC SESSION (2012/13): ____________

PROGRAMME TITLE: ___________________________________________ CODE: ____________

STUDENT NAME __________________________ STUDENT NUMBER __________________________

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: __________________________ Date of submission: ____________

MODULE INFORMATION

Students should accurately name the programme modules for which they are seeking exemption this year.
Programme staff should confirm the outcome of the student's application for module exemptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme modules achievable by RPL exemption</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
<th>CRN</th>
<th>OUTCOME OF APPLICATION for academic record and Fees Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Approved by: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Head of School/Programme Chair

For Fees & Income Office use Only

Total Tuition Fee in Banner : €________
Total Exemption discount applied for : €________
Total Refund/Discount Due : €________
Discount applied in Banner by : __________
% Discount to Total Fee : __________
5. Recording module exemptions on the Institutes Information Systems

Genesis
This chapter was drafted in direct response to a technical problem identified by academic and examinations staff who wish to record exemptions from elements of modules on the EGB and Banner against the student’s academic history record. It was also intended as a quick mechanism to track RPL usage for module exemption purposes – as recommended in the 2011 Institute Quality Review report from the NQAI. A number of key staff in Examinations Offices were consulted regarding the possible efficacy of the proposed procedures.

Policy context
Approved policy and mechanisms for the processing and recording of module exemptions based on RPL are included in four key documents as follows:

a. DIT policies and procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL) June 2008
b. General Assessment Regulations (GARs), June 2009 - Chapter 8: Recognition and assessment of prior learning
d. Revised module template, June 2010.

Policies regarding recording referrals are in General Assessment Regulations, June 2009

Recording of module exemptions or exemption from an element of a module based on RPL
a. Module exemptions/exemption from elements of a module are awarded to registered students when their prior learning in relation to the module or element of the module has been assessed by the programme team in relation to the learning outcomes concerned.
b. Academic decisions about module exemptions/exemption from elements of a module based on RPL are entered into the student record for credit accumulation, examination and award purposes.
c. The letters EX are recommended to record module exemptions based on RPL in the student record using BANNER.
d. Numeric information for BANNER is normally transferred from the Electronic Grade Book (EGB). But letters such as EX are not used in the EGB.
e. Where an element of a module is exempted on the basis of RPL there is no way for academic staff to fill the relevant EGB box with letters or of leaving it blank.

Recording of module exemptions or exemption from an element/components of a module based on referral from one Examination Board to a later Board.

a. Students who pass one element of a module but fail another/others may be referred to the next Board for re-submission and assessment.
b. In some cases all the elements are referred and repeated. In other cases only the failed element is required to be repeated.
c. In some cases all the module elements are elided or combined in a single repeat assessment and only one mark entered into the EGB.
Statement of the problem to be addressed – recording exemption from element/components of a module

a. There is no standard approach to how component exemptions are calculated or recorded across the Institute.
b. The EGB is a numeric system only: EX cannot be entered into the EGB system to represent exemption from an element of a module.
c. A system to facilitate the recording an exemption from an element of a module which transfers the decision from the EGB to Banner needed to be developed so that the business of Module Boards, Progression Boards and Award Boards is transparent and accurate to all involved, and so that the student academic record and examination transcripts accurately capture the academic decisions made and so that decisions are accurately recording at Boards.
d. The solution developed should operate within existing policies and mechanisms already approved by Academic Council until a standard approach is devised and the seamless interface between the EGB and Banner is finalised and fully operational.

Solution for recording of full module exemptions based on RPL:
In managing the accurate recording of exemptions/exemption from an element of a module based on RPL into the student academic record in the EGB and Banner, the following steps are recommended to be taken:

a. The Academic Programme Committees approves the module exemption(s) based on agreed criteria.
b. The Academic Year tutor, or designated person responsible, provides the Examination Office with a copy of the approved Module Assessment Exemption form\(^1\) for the students concerned which clearly indicates the Module concerned. Ideally this should be done immediately after the module exemption has been approved at the start of the semester/academic year with the proviso that the decision of the exemption is not final until the Examination Board approves it.
c. BANNER: Exemptions granted for modules can be entered into Banner directly following the receipt of the signed Module Assessment Exemption form by the Academic Programme coordinator.
   i. The forms in Banner to deal with Exemptions are SFASLST and SHATCKN
   ii. On the form SFASLST the
      o The academic history final grade will be EX
      o The grade comment will be Exemption
      o The results will be rolled to academic history
   iii. On the form SHATCKN
      o The grade change description will be EX.
d. EGB: Academic programme staff will not enter marks for any student with an approved module exemption within the EGB.

Below is a flowchart for recording a full Module exemption into the student academic record.

---
\(^1\) RPL MOD. EX. Form 4
## Full Module Exemptions

### Solution for recording an exemption from an element/component of a module based on RPL

1. The Academic Programme Committee approves the module exemption(s) from an element/elements of a module based on agreed criteria.
2. The Academic Year tutor, or designated person responsible, provides the Examination Office with a copy of the student’s Module Assessment Exemption form.
3. The student completes the component(s) of the module from which he/she is not exempted and is duly examined in those components.
4. The Academic staff person/s responsible for assessment of the module inputs the results for the components duly completed and does not enter anything for the exempted components in the relevant box.
5. The Academic staff calculate the total mark for the module based on the components completed and components exempted using the agreed formula for the programme.
6. The overall module mark is made known directly to Examinations Office by the Academic staff person/s responsible and input directly into Banner against the module concerned.
7. The overall agreed mark of the module is approved at the Module/Progression and Award Board. The relevant Examination Board is informed of the provenance/origin/calculation of the final mark and all relevant documentation is available to the Board.
8. Any adjustment to the overall mark is made at the Module/Progression and Award Board and updated in Banner by the Examination Office following the board.
9. The form in Banner to deal with Exemptions is SFASLST
   - The academic history final grade will be the numeric mark given by the academic
   - The grade comment will be blank subject to the overall result being of a pass standard
   - The results will be rolled to academic history
### Exemption from a element/component of a module (Partial Module Exemption)

**Solution for recording elements of modules where an element is failed, referred and then elided into one full module repeat.**

a. The practice of managing reassessment of modules in which students have been referred, is by one of two methods. Either method is normally recorded within the programme document as to how reassessment of referred modules has to be managed. This referral of a module is due to not meeting the pass threshold for the module or a compulsory component of the module. In each instance the student is required to do one of the following:
   
   i. Re-submit or re-sit the element(s) of the module which do not meet the pass threshold.
   
   ii. Re-submit or re-sit a new piece of work or exam which counts as 100% of the total module irrespective of the number of elements which did not meet the pass threshold.

b. In the case of instance i. the academic overwrites the referred element within the EGB at reassessment time. Once saved, this will recalculate the overall mark for the module which includes the reassessed element and any other passed elements.

c. In the case of instance ii. the academic inputs one mark within EGB for the reassessment and excludes the other elements which were taken at assessment time. EGB will re-distribute the weightings of the excluded elements to the element with the reassessment mark, thus giving the reassessed mark the full 100% weighting of the module.

D. Where students have been exempted an element of a module and have not met the pass threshold in the non exempt component the decision of the module/progression and award board will be final as to what element have to be reassessed.
6. FAQ about Module exemptions through RPL

Revised version: August 2012

Highlighted sections relate to management of module exemptions

1. What is meant by prior learning, prior certificated learning, prior experiential learning, formal learning, non-formal, informal learning etc?

In the DIT context **prior learning** generally means learning which occurred before applying for, and being accepted on to, a DIT programme.

**Prior certificated learning** generally refers to learning that resulted from structured education and training programmes where assessment and an award were involved. Usually there is a certificate to prove such learning. It should be possible to place such learning in relation to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with regard to level and size (major, minor, special purpose, supplemental etc.) This is usually regarded as **formal** learning.

**Prior experiential learning** generally refers to learning achieved through work, voluntary activities or independent study. This kind of learning may have resulted in certificates of various kinds and may, or may not, have involved formal assessment in the academic sense. Sometimes the term **non-formal learning** is used to describe this learning when it results in a certificate but not one that is easily placed on the NQF. **Informal learning** generally refers to learning achieved that was not part of a structured event, such as learning from voluntary activities. Higher education practitioners generally distinguish between certificated and non-certificated/experiential learning without necessarily using the terms ‘non-formal’ and ‘informal’.

2. Does the DIT have an agreed policy position on RPL?

Yes! The DIT RPL Policies and Procedures document was approved by Academic Council in June 2008 and is available in the RPL page on the DIT staff intranet.

The revised **General Assessment Regulations** document has a chapter on RPL assessment.

The revised **Quality Enhancement Handbook** and **Module Template** both have RPL elements.

All three revised documents are on the RPL webpage on the staff intranet.

3. Does the DIT have a code of practice for RPL?

The RPL policy document June 2008 indicates the recommended procedures to be followed with regard to quality assurance, recording, equity, etc.. Additional details are included in the **RPL Implementation Guide for Schools** and in the booklet: **RPL Matters in the DIT – policy and practice guide for staff**, both of which are available on the RPL page on the DIT staff intranet. This part 2 document is to accompany the first guide.
4. **What can RPL be used for at undergraduate level?**

At undergraduate level RPL can be used in a number of ways, including the following:

a. for formative/capacity building and identification of levels and volume of prior learning as well as identifying current and future learning needs. This type of RPL is not usually assessed or awarded credits, thought the RPL exercise may be included in a module that is assessed and awarded credits.

b. for the purpose of **initial entry** where the standard entry requirements are not met.

c. for the purpose of **advanced entry**

d. for the purpose of **transfer** from one programme to another

e. for **transfer** from one providing institution to another

f. for **exemption** from programme modules where the applicant can provide evidence of having achieved the learning outcomes already (see section 7 in this guide).

g. for achievement of a **whole award**, usually where there may be an award of a lower level in the same cognate area, such as a holder of a National Diploma which is now placed at level 7 wishing to achieve a level 8 award in the same discipline/subject area and who has significant relevant, work-based learning (see section 8 of this guide).

5. **What can RPL be used for at postgraduate level?**

a. At postgraduate level RPL can be used for **non-standard/exceptional case entry** purposes.

b. Some postgraduate programmes may also offer module exemptions on the basis of RPL e.g. where a student with a PhD may be exempted from a research methods module at Postgraduate Diploma or Masters level. Postgraduate applicants with significant, relevant work-based experience may be exempted from programme modules on a case-by-case basis.

c. A PhD by publications could be said to constitute an RPL award.

6. **How would we organise RPL information sessions or training sessions?**

Contact the RPL Policy Officer: Dr Anne Murphy

Phone: 01 402 7507 087 907 3348

Email: anne.murphy@dit.ie

There are several levels of information and training available, from general introductory information, to workshops, to a 5 Credit CPD course in RPL.

Individual DIT staff, programme teams, Departments or Schools may request RPL support at any time.

7. **What is available on-line about RPL?**

The DIT website has information related to RPL for the public.

http://www.dit.ie/services/academic/recognitionofpriorlearningrpl/

Additional information will be made available as appropriate.

Information for staff is available on the staff intranet.
8. **Who is the first point of contact for enquiries to the DIT?**

It is likely that enquiries about RPL will be received by a number of individuals, services and functions, including the Recruitment and Admissions Office, Office of Graduate Studies, Access Office, Mature Student Recruitment Office, Careers Service, Students’ Union etc.. It is also likely that academic staff whose names and contact details are in recruitment and publicity material for programmes, may be contacted by the public.

The RPL Policy Officer will be noted on the website as a first point of direct contact. Enquiries to the RPL Officer may be re-directed to the relevant DIT staff and logged for quality assurance and evaluation purposes.

9. **How do RPL applicants know about RPL in DIT programme?**

a. The DIT website has a webpage about RPL under the heading:
   **Studying at the DIT**
   
   [http://www.dit.ie/services/academic/recognitionofpriorlearningrpl/](http://www.dit.ie/services/academic/recognitionofpriorlearningrpl/)

b. The Admissions and Recruitment Office mentions RPL in its FAQs section.

c. The Access Office may have information about RPL in addition to general access information.

d. Brochures for Faculties indicate entry requirements that include RPL.

e. On-line information for Schools may also indicate RPL.

f. New students should be informed about RPL for module exemptions at **induction** and through the **Student Handbook** or the programme. Use of the RPL Mod. Ex. Form 1 in this circumstance is most appropriate.

10. **How would potential applicants self-assess themselves before considering an RPL application?**

    The RPL page on the DIT website will eventually include a simple exercise in self-assessment in relation to prior learning. However, this exercise will be for information and formative purposes only and will not represent an assessment activity in relation to any specific programme.

    An e-portfolio system is also planned.

11. **How is an enquiry referred to staff at programme level?**

    The Recruitment and Admission Office, Access office, and RPL Policy Office have established procedures for referrals of enquiries to the relevant Departments/ Schools/ Programme Coordinators.

12. **How should we deal with RPL enquiries?**

    a. It is likely that programme documents will indicate management systems for RPL.

    b. If programme teams are interested in developing procedures to deal with RPL enquiries the RPL Policy Officer will assist.
c. A generic flowchart indicating the stages in processing an RPL application for module exemption purposes is included on the RPL staff intranet webpage and also on section 4.1 of this document.

13. Are there generic forms available for the processing and management of module exemptions based on RPL?
Yes. There are several generic forms on the RPL page on the staff intranet and in section 4.2 of this document. The documents can be adapted for usage at programme level. The idea behind the generic forms is to encourage a coherent approach to academic, operational and recording aspects of module exemptions, as we are now obliged to track and report on RPL usage across the Institute.

14. Is it essential to track RPL usage on a programme level?
Yes. The recommendation of the 2011 quality review now requires recording and tracking of module exemptions and the use of RPL for initial entry, advanced entry, module exemptions and full award. Section 5 of this document explains the process for recording full and components of modules through Banner and EGB.

15. What are the roles and responsibilities in relation to RPL in the Department and School?

a. It is usual for advanced entry and module exemptions to be managed at programme level with oversight at Department and School levels. Ideally a generic report document should be used for transparency and recording purposes.

b. The RPL Guides provide some direction in relation to describing RPL processes and management issues at programme, Department and School levels.

16. How are RPL submissions/assessments managed electronically for recording purposes?

The agreed Institute-wide system of electronically recording RPL decisions for assessment and award classification purposes is to use the letter EX where no mark is awarded. Section 5 of this guide illustrates the process for recording electronically RPL exemption decisions in conjunction with the Examination offices. However, there this process is for the current version and operations of Banner and EGB. In future this process may change due to technology changes within the Institute.
17. **How does the appeal system work?**

The grounds for appeal of an RPL decision for module exemptions are outlined in the RPL Policy Document June 2008 based on the principle that relevant information or documents not available at the time of application may be presented at appeal, once only. A document to record the outcome of appeals and to report to the applicant is available on the staff intranet. This appeals system is quite different to the appeals procedures for assessment results based on current learning on a programme.

18. **What are the risks for staff in implementing RPL?**

a. There are no greater risks in implementing RPL than in any other process for admission or for assessment, provided there is transparency, good practice in implementation and clear recording.

b. A perceived risk might be where RPL exemptions without grading may impact less than favourably on final award classification. Students should be appropriately informed of any such risks.

c. The key principles of never disadvantaging a student, and of using RPL assessment methods that are appropriate and fit-for-purpose, are likely to guard against perceived or real risks.

19. **How is quality maintained?**

Quality assurance aspects of RPL practices are now dealt with in the revised Quality Enhancement Handbook and in the revised General Assessment Regulations.

The revised module template requires details about arrangement for assessment through RPL. New and revised programme documents are required to explain how RPL figures in the programme for entry and for module exemptions purposes.

Programme staff may be required to produce documents used for RPL assessment and for recording of decisions, in line with good practice for transparency and fairness. Documents to record decisions about entry and advanced entry may also be requested.

20. **How does a full award by RPL work?**

a. A possible instance for applying for a full award on the basis of RPL might be in cases where a former DIT student was unable for *bona fide* reasons to complete a programme of study but wishes to do so by RPL. It may be the case that no exit award was issued but that considerable assessment results were recorded. It would be feasible in such a case to arrange for assessment of subsequent formal learning and work-related learning to satisfy the learning outcomes of the ‘missed’ element/s of the award, and possibly to relate the entire learning to any new appropriate award in a similar cognate area.

b. The DIT has provision for the award of a PhD by Publications. This is essentially RPL. The process also has a formative dimension in that it indicates to applicants the levels and types of evidence required but not yet acquired.

c. Technically it is possible for an applicant to challenge the programme learning outcomes of a full award on the basis of RPL. In such a case the DIT as an awarding body is initially responsible for management of the application and for assessment of the claim, though
the onus is always on the applicant to prove that he/she has met the learning outcomes to the programme.

21. **What are RPL trends nationally and internationally?**
   a. The trend nationally is to standardise RPL Practice within the document agreed by the national RPL Advisory Group: *Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education*, NQAI, June 2005.
   b. The trend internationally is to make comparability of systems easier through sharing of principles and practices within the Bologna and Copenhagen frameworks, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).
   c. The current trend is for levels of awards related to discipline areas and work sectors, which will inevitably influence how RPL is used in the near future internationally.
   d. In recent years there is increasing interest in the use of RPL to cross-skill, re-skill and up-skill workers who have been made unemployed in the economic recession.

22. **Where might I get scholarly information about RPL?**
   There is considerable scholarly information available from the RPL Policy Officer on request: A library repository is planned for a future date.
   There are also structured opportunities to consider the scholarly dimensions of RPL in the CPD course for staff.

23. **How much of a programme can be available through RPL?**
   There is no explicit regulation in this regard as Institute-wide policy is that each programme document specifies its own arrangements. Some programmes permit no RPL for entry or exemptions. Some programmes permit it only at non-classification stages.
   As RPL is considered an academic activity, it is presumed that academic judgement is appropriately exercised at the programme design stage with appropriate levels of oversight. It can be operationally tricky where programme are sharing modules with different arrangements for exemptions. Programme handbooks for students should give clear and accurate information regarding just how many credits and module may be achieved through RPL.

24. **Are module exemptions graded?**
   It is possible to grade module exemptions based on RPL, both certificated and experiential. Grading criteria and marking schemes should be agreed, explicit and fairly applied.
   RPL candidates who seek graded exemptions based on precious award results should be informed of the risks for their overall award classification.

25. **How are RPL credits managed in the award classification process?**
   Again, at award classification stage systems of grading RPL exemptions should be explicit and fairly applied. Applicants may withdraw an application following academic advice and take the taught mode.
26. Can marks from previous certificated learning be used again for award classification purposes?
   In principle this is possible. In practice it is also possible. However, good academic judgement and explicit advice are important in such instances.

27. How can we combine RPL and learning contracts where an applicant has most of the learning outcomes achieved for a programme or module?
   There is increasing use of partial RPL exemption combined with appropriate learning contracts. The benefit here is that the student achieves all the learning outcomes of the module and ‘revisits’ earlier learning.

   It is also possible to grade such arrangements in the normal way for classification purposes.

28. How can we prevent an applicant using the same RPL evidence for multiple awards?
   An applicant’s record of awards should be available on application to a programme. Good academic judgement at admissions stage will prevent multiple awards.

29. Do we facilitate applicants who want to agree RPL exemptions and credits before applying?
   The DIT admissions procedure requires a formal application before consideration of RPL for advanced entry to a programme. The decision to offer advanced entry is made at programme level by staff who are competent to do so.

   RPL Credits and module exemptions are available only to registered students on DIT programmes. While module exemptions are not formally granted until the meeting of a module, progression or award board at the end of a semester, it is possible for the module exemption process to be completed within three weeks of the start of the semester. In such cases the usual signatures of internal assessors for the modules concerned are required on the module exemption report. The new Mod. Ex Forms in this Guide 2 will help to manage this aspect.

30. Who explains the RPL process to enquiries from the general public?
   Enquiries can come from a number of sources. The DIT website has information for the public with regard to advanced entry.
   Enquiries of a precise nature are frequently referred to the programme co-ordinator concerned.

31. Can we refer enquiries that come directly to us...if so what happens to them?
   If the enquiry is for admission purpose it is usual to refer it to the Admissions Office or Graduate Admissions.
   Enquiries about module exemptions are usually dealt with by the programme team, and with the advice of the RPL Officer where appropriate.

32. How are RPL exemptions dealt with on BANNER?
   **Full module exemptions gained through RPL without grading are recorded as EX on BANNER.**

   Arrangements for partial exemptions form elements/components are outlined earlier in this Guide.

   Graded RPL can be recorded in the usual way.
Final arrangements for recording RPL on the Diploma Supplement are not yet issued.

33. Where would I get examples of RPL practice at programme level in the DIT?
A set of recorded presentations about DIT RPL practices is available on CDRom from each School and Faculty Head of Learning Development. Additional CDRoms may be requested from the RPL Policy Officer.

34. Are there fee reductions in cases where module exemptions are approved?

Some programmes offer fee refunds for module exemptions; other do not.

Students who are paying fees and who are on programmes which offer refunds for module exemptions are entitled to fee refunds of up to 50% of the module fee provided the total refund does not exceed 25% of the programme fee for that year.

A generic form to process fee refunds through Fees Office is available on the RPL page of the staff intranet and earlier in this Guide (Mod. Ex. Form 7).
7. **Mechanism for achievement of a Specialist Bachelors Degree**
through a combination of RPL and real-time learning

There are a number of reasons why academic staff have expressed a desire to achieve a specialist bachelor degree. The main reasons are probably 4, as follows:

1. **Teaching/lecturer staff in particular ‘subject matter’ areas where a level 7 or level 8 degree has recently been developed and validated may not have a similar degree themselves – possibly because such a specialist degree did not exist heretofore, or perhaps because their initial specialism or qualification is in a different area. Such staff may, or may not, have a bachelor degree, an ‘old’ Higher Diploma or a craft qualification already. In these cases staff could enhance their teaching careers and job security by achieving a specialist bachelor degree.**

2. **Teaching/lecturer staff who gained a postgraduate award – either in their subject area or in ‘teaching’ - through exceptional case entry/without an Honours bachelor degree may now require an ‘achieved’ level 8 award for recognition or progression purposes.**

3. **Staff who have achieved considerable specialist knowledge and skills but who have no ‘recognition’ of such achievements may desire to measure their informal and non-formal learning against a formal curriculum in order to achieve public recognition and career enhancement opportunities.**

4. **Validation panels now take careful note of the qualifications profiles of programme staff to ensure that there is sufficient expert capacity to sustain the programme.**

From an Institute perspective, there are merits in facilitating staff who teach on ‘new’ specialist degrees to achieve the award themselves for academic quality assurance reasons.

**POSSIBLE MECHANISMS**

Mechanisms for staff to achieve a DIT level 7 or 8 specialist award will invariably involve RPL, gap analysis, real-time learning contracts, registration and a clear academic pathway of credit accumulation. It will involve appropriate arrangements for achievement of new learning, mindful of the professional status of colleagues and the need to maintain their academic identities. A combination of self-assessment against programme learning outcomes and possibly against key module learning outcomes, RPL, learning contracts, guided reading, and projects, are appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the award can be achieved, possibly combined into a ‘dossier’ or ‘folio’ which is presented for assessment. There are a number of such ‘folio’ models in use at bachelor and master levels already in the DIT.

This type of mechanism will invariably involve at least one year’s registration with the support of an academic mentor who should ideally be a senior lecturer on the ‘target’ degree. A major project or thesis is likely to be involved.

**REWARD:** Capacity building towards ensuring that all staff teaching on a specialist degree have relevant qualifications in terms of both content and level.
7.1 PROCESS STEPS

Version 1

1. The applicant seeks advice from the Department.
2. The Department advises and provides the relevant application form.
3. The applicant submits the completed initial application form for the specific programme/award.
4. The Department appoints small team to oversee the process (experts in the programme).
5. The Department considers the application: and decides to accept or reject.
6. A successful applicant is provided with an initial Guide which includes the following:
   - A description of how the process works following acceptance
   - An outline of the responsibilities of the applicant
   - An outline of the supports available to accompany the applicant through the process
   - A pro-forma/template of the required dossier/portfolio of evidence of prior learning in relation to the programme learning outcomes.
   - An outline of the registration procedure/advance entry mechanism.
   - An outline of the assessment criteria.
   - An outline of the assessment activities involved.
7. The Department appoints an ‘accompanier/mentor’ who assists the applicant in compilation of the evidence as outlined.
8. The applicant registers as an advanced entry ‘student’.
9. The Department decides the stages of submission and assessment over the academic year in relation to the award.
10. The Department decides if the award is classified or non-classified and applies assessment regulation accordingly.
11. The Department appoints a panel of assessors.
12. The External Examiner is informed.

Version 2

1. The applicant completes the specific application form in relation to the target DIT award.
2. The completed form is submitted to the Head of Department for the target award.
3. The Head of Department briefs the Head of School.
4. The Head of Department convenes a panel of relevant academic assessors for the target award and which includes the RPL Policy Officer to establish if the applicant has sufficient prior learning to register as an advanced entry ‘student’ and to prepare a folio/dossier of evidence in relation to the programme learning outcomes of the target awards. A report is prepared for the applicant with advice regarding completion of the dossier and regarding any new learning that might be required.
5. The Head of Department and RPL Officer meet the applicant to discuss the panel report and to advise regarding the registration and format and contents of the dossier to be prepared.
6. An academic mentor is appointed to accompany the applicant in preparation of the dossier and in acquisition of any new learning required in relation to the programme learning outcomes.

7. The applicant registers as an advanced entry ‘student’ on the target programme for at least one semester.

8. The completed dossier of prior and ‘new’ learning is submitted for assessment to the Head of Department.

9. The Head of Department convenes an internal assessment panel which should include the Head of School. Advice may be sought from the External Examiner. An oral presentation may be required.

10. The result of the assessment panel is tabled at the next Progression/Award Board together with the dossier – if required.

11. If the award is to be graded/classified the criteria for classification should be in line with the standard programme. If the award is Pass/Fail a minor modification may be required through College Board in advance of the student registering.
7.2 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES in RPL Mechanism for staff to achieve a full award

This mechanism involves three main roles: applicant; advisor/mentor; assessor.

Each role has specific responsibilities and boundaries, broadly as follows:

1. The applicant is the staff member applying to a particular Department or School and who wishes to gain a specific DIT award provided by that Department/School.

2. The applicant makes an application for the award using the application form provided.

3. The Department (Head of Department and relevant members of the programme team) decides whether or not to accept the applicant as an RPL candidate for the award and informs the applicant of that decision.

4. The applicant registers as an advanced entrant on the part-time mode at College level.

5. The Department nominates an advisor/mentor to accompany the applicant through the process of compiling a dossier of evidence to support their application for the award using the dossier template.

6. The advisor/mentor is normally independent of the assessment process. The advisor/mentor maintains a light-touch involvement and does not make judgements on the sufficiency or otherwise of the contents of the dossier. The role is primarily a technical advisory one in relation to the structure of the dossier and in relation to providing the necessary programme document with accurate programme and module learning outcomes within it. The key to the dossier is provision of evidence of sufficient prior learning to satisfy the learning outcomes of the programme and the modules of the programme with the appropriate level and content.

7. The onus is entirely on the applicant to compile the dossier and to submit it to the Department on an agreed date.

8. The applicant is expected to follow the advice given and not to engage in bargaining or negotiation regarding provision of evidence of prior learning.

9. Following submission or the dossier the department nominates two internal assessors competent to make informed judgements on the dossier in relation to the award.

10. The assessors consider the evidence provided in relation to ALL modules up to the value of 180 ECTS credits using the criteria and report form agreed. One form should be completed and signed for each module. The mode of delivery for the taught programme is irrelevant in the context of an application for a full award.
11. The **outcome** of the assessment process is **agreed and signed** by the assessors together with identification of any learning **gaps** and how such gaps are to be **filled** by the candidate before the award can be offered.

12. The External Examiner should be briefed regarding the RPL dossier and the process involved to arrive at the assessment decision.

13. If the applicant is **successful** the final assessment outcome is noted as an unclassified **PASS** using the EGB and presented at the appropriate assessment Boards. *(This may need clarifications.)* **A classified award can be made only if there are agreed marking schemes for each module for an RPL mode.**

14. If the applicant is unsuccessful he/she is advised of the new learning required to achieve the award and a learning **contract** is agreed and signed by the applicant.

15. An applicant may appeal a decision once only – in line with the agreed DIT RPL policy document.

16. The parchment for the award is as normally supplied.
### Notes to applicants

You will need a copy of the target programme document so that you can self-assess your prior learning when completing your application.

Please organise your application into a file or dossier.

Include colour copies of certificates and parchments: NOT originals.

As an applicant you are responsible for the accuracy of the information you provide.

All applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

If an application is accepted real-time learning agreements are negotiated between the applicant and the programme team concerned.

A minimum of one academic year’s registration is likely to be required to achieve a major award by advanced entry, RPL and real-time learning.

Assessment and classification will follow DIT General Assessment Regulations.
## Your Curriculum Vitae using a modified Europass CV template

### Personal Information
- **First name(s)**
- **Surname**
- **Postal address**
- **Phone numbers**
- **Fax number**
- **Email address**
- **LinkedIn**
- **Facebook**
- **Nationality**
- **Date of birth**
- **Gender**

### DIT programme concerned in this application
- **Title:**

### Work experience starting with the most recent

1. **Start date:**
   - Name and address of employer:
   - Type of industry/sector:
   - Position/s held:
   - Main responsibilities:

2. **Start Date:**
   - Name and address of employer:
   - Type of industry/sector:
   - Position/s held:
   - Main responsibilities:
   - **Finish date:**

3. **Start Date:**
   - Name and address of employer:
   - Type of industry/sector:
   - Position/s held:
   - Main responsibilities:
   - **Finish date:**

4. **Start Date:**
   - Name and address of employer:
   - Type of industry/sector:
   - Position/s held:
   - Main responsibilities:
   - **Finish date:**

### Education and Training
- **Start with the most recent**
- **Date Achieved:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title of the award:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of the award on the NQF (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Months/years of study involved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awarding body:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Date Achieved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title of the award:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of the award on the NQF (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Months/years of study involved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awarding body:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Date Achieved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title of the award:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of the award on the NQF (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Months/years of study involved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awarding body:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Date Achieved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title of the award:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of the award on the NQF (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Months/years of study involved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awarding body:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Date Achieved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title of the award:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of the award on the NQF (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Months/years of study involved:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awarding body:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of driving licence**

**Language skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Language 2**

Language: .................................................................

**Level of competence (tick which word/s apply)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening only</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Language 3**

Language: .................................................................

**Level of competence (tick which word/s apply)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening only</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**IT/computer skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List any formal IT training and/or qualification/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other IT skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organisational and Management competences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal learning and voluntary activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects managed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other skills and competences**

Describe any other relevant skills and competences not mentioned earlier
Part 3
CERTIFICATES, TRANSCRIPTS, SYLLABI etc.
(for qualifications and awards mentioned in your Europass CV)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of document</th>
<th>Year achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 4
Initial self-assessment of connections between prior learning and the particular programme/modules to which the application relates

In this section the applicant considers the learning outcomes, syllabus content, reading lists, and assessment exercises for the programme modules from which they are seeking exemption to achieve a whole award.

It may be the case that particular qualifications and awards will be accepted for advanced entry without a module-by-module exercise. This will be notified to applicants in advance.

The real-time learning agreement will be structured to cover the gaps in prior learning identified in the application form.
7.4 RPL Self-Assessment Activities to accompany your CV

Name of award sought: ___________________________ Code: ______________

**Step 1:** Check the list of prior qualifications listed in the programme document that entitle you to advanced entry to the programme and note if you have already achieved any of those qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor award title</th>
<th>Prior certificated learning accepted for advanced entry</th>
<th>Year you achieved it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2.**
Read details of the modules on the programme of your choice by clicking on the Institutes Programme module catalogue or by consulting an accurate copy of the programme document.

**Step 3:** List the modules from the programme that best match your prior learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module title</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
<th>Stage of the programme (early, middle, end)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Step 4:** List the Learning Outcomes from the first module in your list by copying them from the module descriptor/template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module title</th>
<th>Module Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On successful completion of this module the learner should be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 5:** If you are considering an application for exemption from your first choice module you should think about how you might provide evidence of your prior learning to match the learning outcomes for the module. Types of evidence might include some of the following:

- Formal courses you attended
- Workplace training sessions
- Job descriptions
- Roles in voluntary organisations
- Licences
- Awards
- Prizes
- Letters of commendation
- Reports you produced
- Publications
- Inventions
- Inspection reports
- Appraisal reports
- Events you organised

**Step 6:** Use the table below to help you narrow down the types of evidence of prior learning you might use to seek exemption from the modules you listed in Step 4 above. Of course you may use the same evidence for more than one learning outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of RPL evidence</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples of evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal learning</td>
<td>Courses which were formally organised and assessed.</td>
<td>Certificates, Transcripts of results, Syllabi, Research reports/thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-formal learning</td>
<td>Training events which were organised but did not necessarily have assessment.</td>
<td>Descriptions of courses, Certificates of attendance, Samples of materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal learning/self managed learning</td>
<td>Learning you achieved that was not organised by others</td>
<td>Voluntary activities, Self-study schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work history and job descriptions</td>
<td>Aspects of your paid and voluntary work that are relevant to the module</td>
<td>Job descriptions, Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samples of work</td>
<td>If there is physical evidence of your prior learning other than certificates etc</td>
<td>Reports, Project plans, Designs, Photographs, Completed documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports from employers/managers</td>
<td>If there is no tangible evidence of your learning it may be possible to arrange verification from third parties/employers/managers</td>
<td>Letters of verification, References, Records from HR Departments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Step 8:** Having carefully thought again about the list of programme modules in Step 3 it might be helpful now for you to consider if you have sufficient and relevant prior learning from work and life activities to apply for a whole award by RPL, or at least a significant proportion of the award. Use the checklist below to self-assess yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-assessment questions</th>
<th>My response is YES</th>
<th>My response is NO</th>
<th>Comments to self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My current and past work records are relevant to the modules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could provide evidence to show that I have gained the learning outcomes already</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no direct evidence but I could get a letter of verification from employers/manages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can locate the required certificates, course descriptions and results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to undertake the necessary studies to fill any gaps in my prior learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My prior learning is sufficiently related to the modules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My prior learning has been kept up-to-date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to demonstrate my prior learning in relation to some or all of the learning outcomes by completing set activities or doing a presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 9:** Use the worked example of RPL applied to a Level 6 (DIT Certificate) module below to plan your own application for RPL module exemptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award/Programme Title</th>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Business Finance</td>
<td>TFAC1005</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>On successful completion of this module the learner should be able to: a. explain the importance of financial management within a business environment b. record basic business transactions and produce a set of final accounts c. evaluate accounts within the context of performance evaluation d. describe the relationships between costing, pricing, cash and profit e. prepare basic budgets and budget projections, and carry out simple variance analysis f. carry out banking reconciliation and stock valuation exercises g. discuss the underlying principles of investment appraisal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Possible RPL Evidence (Decided by the module author/academic)</td>
<td>What evidence you the applicant can provide without great effort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. explain the importance of financial management within a business environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. record basic business transactions and produce a set of final accounts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. evaluate accounts within the context of performance evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. describe the relationships between costing, pricing, cash and profit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. prepare basic budgets and budget projections, and carry out simple variance analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. carry out banking reconciliation and stock valuation exercises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. discuss the underlying principles of investment appraisal</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 10:**
Find out what assessment criteria are used for the RPL modules you select. Your evidence will be judged against these criteria. Generally assessment criteria for prior learning from work and life experiences include the following:

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**
- **Relevance** to the programme or module
- **Currency and recency** of the learning – is it up-to-date?
- **Sufficiency** for the programme/module
- **Level** of the prior learning relative to the level of the programme/module
- **Authenticity** – Is it really your learning? Can it be verified?

**CERTIFICATED LEARNING**
1. **Volume** of prior learning in terms of years/duration of the previous award/s: less than one year full-time, one-year full-time, two years full-time, three years full time, four years full-time, years of part-time. Number and types of **credits**.
2. **Depth/level** of learning in terms of its placement e.g. stage of undergraduate award (CPD, certificate, diploma or degree) or postgraduate award (CPD, certificate, diploma, taught masters, research masters, taught doctorate, research doctorate).
3. **Learning outcomes/learning achieved** – the precise knowledge, skills, competences etc the holder of the award achieved on successful completion
4. **Syllabus content** – areas/subjects covered in the teaching process
5. **Key readings**
6. **Individual products** such as thesis, models, designs, projects etc.
7. **Supervised practice or placement**
8. **Internship**
9. **Currency/Recency**
10. **Examination papers**.
Now summarise your self-assessment/analysis of prior learning and areas where new, real time learning is likely to be required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modules you selected as already achieved for advance entry/RPL exemption purposes</th>
<th>Modules which should be the basis of your real-time learning agreement.</th>
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The completed self-assessment form will be used to negotiate and agree the real-time learning required to achieve the bachelor award.
7.5 The real-time learning contract combined with RPL in achievement of a whole award

What a learning contract is

A learning contract is essentially an agreement reached between a student and an academic Department which outlines the activities to be completed for assessment towards credits or towards an award.

There are generally four elements to a learning contract as follows:

1. The activities to be completed by the student
2. The deadlines for each activity
3. The criteria for assessment
4. The resources provided to the student.

The real-time learning contract is generally drawn up and agreed following a thorough evaluation of the student’s application form and identification of learning gaps in relation to the programme and module learning outcomes of the target programme.
## Sample Learning Contract

**LEARNING CONTRACT FORM**

**ACADEMIC SESSION:** _______ / ____

**PROGRAMME TITLE:** ____________________________ **CODE:** _______ **Year:** ___

**STUDENT NAME:** ____________________________ **STUDENT NUMBER:** __________

### 1. The activities to be completed by the student:
   a. ____________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________
   d. ____________________________________________
   e. ____________________________________________

### 2. The deadlines for each activity:
   a. ____________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________
   d. ____________________________________________
   e. ____________________________________________

### 3. The criteria for assessment:
   a. ____________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________
   d. ____________________________________________
   e. ____________________________________________

### 4. The resources provided to the student:
   a. ____________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________
   d. ____________________________________________
   e. ____________________________________________

**Signed (Student):** ____________________________ **Date:** __________

**Signed (Advisor):** ____________________________ **Date:** __________

**Notes:**
1. This form is used in conjunction with the RPL Self Assessment form.
2. The student and Programme Chair complete this form together with reference to the student’s self assessment form.
8. The Masters Qualifier

8.1 CONTEXT & PRINCIPLES:
In the policy and practice context of facilitating access and progression within all levels of the NQF a number of colleagues across the Institute’s academic and administrative functions now deem it judicious for the DIT to consider developing, approving and implementing a formal mechanism which is a ‘qualifying’ route to Masters level programmes – as exists in the university sector – to facilitate applicants who do not meet the minimum entry requirements under standard or non-standard/exceptional case criteria.

EXPLANATION:

a. The purpose of the Masters Qualifier is to enable individuals or cohorts to achieve the entry requirements to a specific target Masters programme, including MPhil., or to a set of named programmes within a School or across Schools by agreement.

b. A Masters Qualifier is applicable in cases where the exceptional case entry mechanism is not appropriate.

c. The Masters Qualifier is a different mechanism to a progression award as it is not intended as a follow-on from specific DIT Level 7 awards and does not result in award of a bachelor degree of any level.

d. The Masters Qualifier should not be confused with advanced entry to the final stage of an existing honours degree programme, again, because it does not result in an honours degree award.

e. The Qualifier is normally used where applicants to a particular Masters programme, or to a set of related programmes, are already holders of a bachelor degree award or equivalent but who did not achieve the required classification or equivalent for entry.

f. It is also appropriate for international applicants whose bachelor degree is deemed not to be fully equivalent to an honours bachelor degree on the Irish NQF.

g. There is a case for a Masters Qualifier for holders of European/Irish bachelor degrees which are equivalent to achievement of the Bologna first cycle but which are not recognised as such in DIT applications procedures.

h. The mechanism is generally a discrete, short programme of bachelor honours degree level – a special purpose, minor award type.
i. The duration of registration for the Qualifier is normally no longer than equivalent to one academic year (no more than 60 ECTS credits). Credits for prior learning may be awarded at the discretion of the receiving programme/s.

j. The content, learning outcomes and mode of achievement are normally decided by the target receiving Masters programme/s within a structure agreed by the DIT.

k. Availability of a Masters Qualifier mechanism does not oblige Schools or programmes to use it.

l. Progression entitlements for graduates of a Masters Qualifier are normally made explicit to applicants in relation to the target Masters award/s and mindful of any relevant accreditation, regulatory or professional relationships.

m. Successful graduates of the Masters Qualifier who meet the entry requirements of the target maters programme should be guaranteed a place on the target programme.

**PROPOSAL**

a. It is proposed that the DIT should operationalise a formal Masters Qualifier mechanism.

b. Management of Qualifiers is essentially at School level, with normal oversight at College level and within Academic Quality Assurance guidelines.

c. The process of approving the Qualifier is broadly as the Q1B process of approving a new short course.

The development and approval process should note the recommended design and content guidelines below:

**8.2 Guidelines for Generic DIT programme design features to inform the Masters Qualifier Q1B-type process at School level**

1. **TITLE:** Masters Qualifier for [insert names of Masters programme/s to which the Qualifier applies]

2. **‘AWARD’ TYPE:** possibly DIT minor, special-purpose award

3. **INTENDED APPLICANTS:** [describe the individuals or cohorts for whom the Masters Qualifier is intended]

4. **DURATION:** Registration of no longer than one academic year/60 ECTS credits.
5. **LEVEL:** Level 8 on the NQF

6. **ECTS CREDITS:** maximum of 60; minimum of 30 [explain likely contexts where less than 60 ECTS credits are awarded and registration is less than one academic year]

7. **MINIMUM ENTRY REQUIREMENTS** [specific to target programme/s]

8. **ARRANGEMENT FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

9. **PROGRESSION ARRANGEMENT** [the assessment grade to be achieved etc]

10. **MASTERS QUALIFIER ‘PROGRAMME’ AIMS**

11. **MASTERS QUALIFIER ‘PROGRAMME’ LEARNING OUTCOMES** [include specifics related to the ‘target’ masters programme/s]

12. **MASTERS QUALIFIER ‘PROGRAMME’ CONTENT:** [use the standard DIT module template to describe the Qualifier content and include a summary table of modules and credit weightings, indicating which modules are obligatory and where co-requisites may apply]

13. **MODE OF DELIVERY:** [outline modes and the degree of flexibility therein]

14. **ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION:** [all Masters Qualifier submissions should be bound in a single document in a format similar to a final Level 8 project/dissertation, clearly indicating the Masters programme/s to which the Qualifier applies]

15. **EXTERNAL EXAMINING:** [indicate appropriate arrangements]

END