University Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning.
As approved by Academic Council 25th January 2006

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) at the University of Limerick encompasses all types of prior learning including, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APL&A), Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC), Learning Outside Formal Teaching (LOFT).

Definition of RPL
RPL is an assessment process to determine the extent of the achievement of an applicant of the learning outcomes, competency, or standards for entry into and partial completion of a programme of study. The prior learning may have been acquired by formal, non-formal or informal routes.

Purpose of RPL
RPL shall be used for the following purposes at the University of Limerick:

- to enable applicants to gain entry to a programme of the university;
- to award credits for part of a programme of study;
- to award exemptions for some programme requirements;

Recognition of prior learning
In applying RPL the University will be cognisant of the need to ensure that the integrity of its awards is rigorously guarded and that academic standards are maintained.
The learning achieved by the applicant must be equivalent to the learning outcomes or performance criteria already set down for the programme of study and must be supported by evidence as required by the university.
Awards will not be given more than once for the same learning achievement where this has taken place either within the University of Limerick or where this has take place in other institutions.

The University may determine that the evidence may be provided in a number of ways including:
- participation in exactly the same form of assessment as other students entering or already on the programme of study;
- portfolio;
- demonstrated skill or competence;
- reflective papers or journal articles that relate previous learning to the stated learning outcomes of the programme or module in question;
- evidence from the workplace or other setting where the student has applied their learning or competence;
- testimonials of learning or competence.

Assessment of RPL

The process will be timely, fair and transparent.

The process will be based on evidence provided by the applicant.

The recognition will result in grades being awarded for modules except in the case where exemptions are given.

The process will be equitable, valid and reliable.

The decisions will be accountable and transparent

The applicant will have the right to appeal.

The evidence and the rationale on which decisions are made will be recorded and retained by the University.
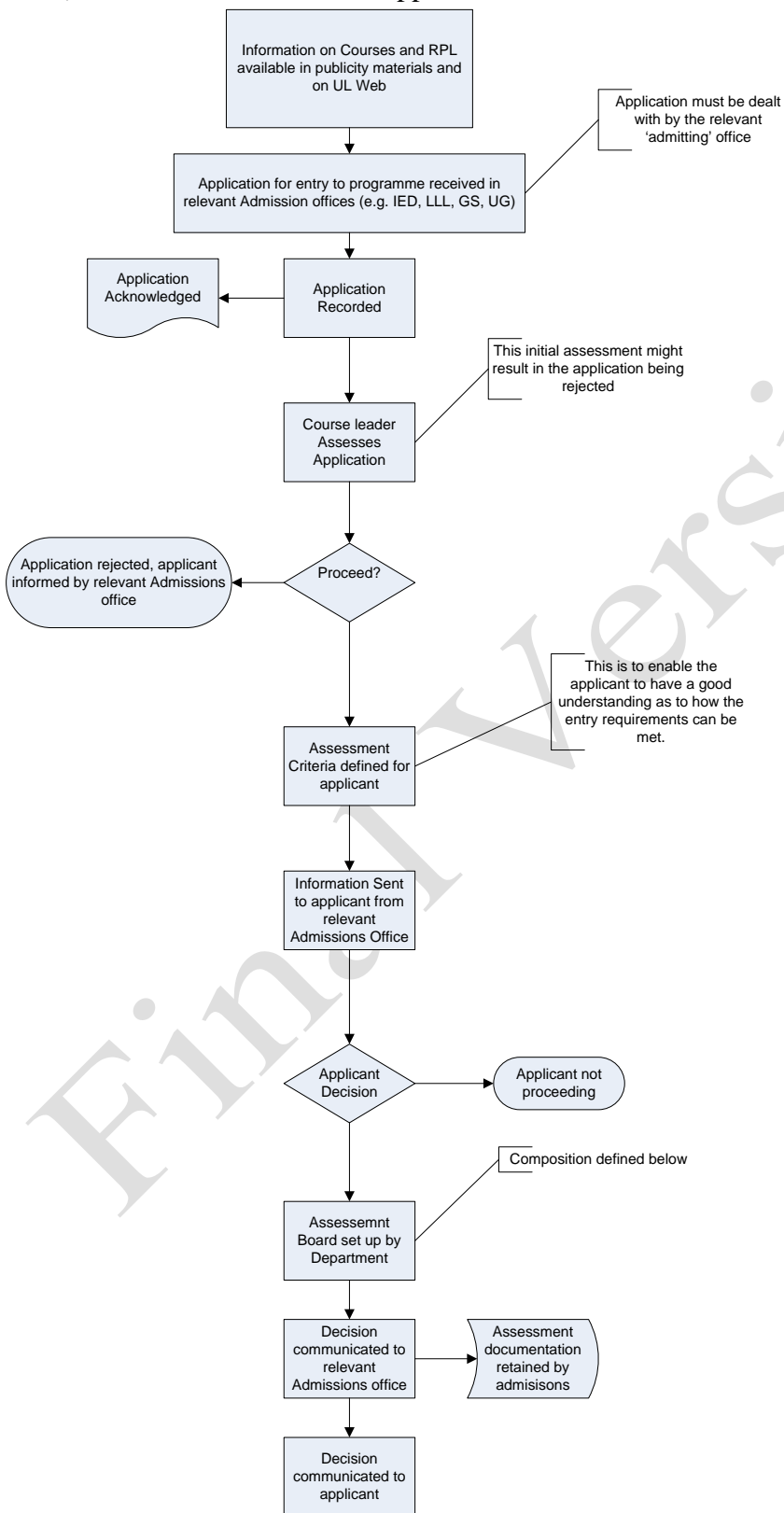
Information for applicants and supporting procedures

Applicants will be provided with sufficient information and guidance on the process to assist them in making their application. Information will be provided to applicants about the learning outcomes of the programmes of study and modules for which RPL can be used to gain access or exemption.

Recognition of Prior Learning – Procedures

(considered by Academic Council 28 June 2006)

1. Flow chart for external applications

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            ┌──────────────────────────────┐
            │ Information on Courses and RPL │
            │ available in publicity materials│        ┌────────────────────┐
            │        and on UL Web          │         │ Application must be │
            └──────────────────────────────┘         │  dealt with by the  │
                          │                            │  relevant 'admitting'│
                          ▼                            │       office        │
            ┌──────────────────────────────┐         └────────────────────┘
            │ Application for entry to programme│
            │ received in relevant Admission   │
            │ offices (e.g. IED, LLL, GS, UG) │
            └──────────────────────────────┘
                          │
   ┌──────────────┐       ▼
   │ Application  │◄──┌──────────────┐
   │ Acknowledged │   │ Application  │
   └──────────────┘   │  Recorded    │
                      └──────────────┘
                          │                            ┌────────────────────┐
                          ▼                            │ This initial assessment│
                  ┌──────────────┐                    │ might result in the │
                  │ Course leader │                    │ application being    │
                  │ Assesses     │                    │      rejected        │
                  │ Application  │                    └────────────────────┘
                  └──────────────┘
                          │
  ┌──────────────────┐    ▼
  │ Application      │◄──◇ Proceed? ◇
  │ rejected, applicant│
  │ informed by relevant│
  │ Admissions office │
  └──────────────────┘
                          │                            ┌────────────────────┐
                          ▼                            │ This is to enable the│
                  ┌──────────────┐                    │ applicant to have a │
                  │ Assessment   │                    │ good understanding  │
                  │ Criteria defined│                  │ as to how the entry │
                  │ for applicant │                    │ requirements can be │
                  └──────────────┘                    │        met.         │
                          │                            └────────────────────┘
                          ▼
                  ┌──────────────┐
                  │ Information Sent│
                  │ to applicant from│
                  │ relevant        │
                  │ Admissions Office│
                  └──────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
                  ◇ Applicant ◇──────► ┌──────────────┐
                  ◇ Decision  ◇        │ Applicant not│
                                       │ proceeding   │
                                       └──────────────┘
                          │                  ┌────────────────────┐
                          ▼                  │ Composition defined │
                  ┌──────────────┐           │       below         │
                  │ Assessemnt   │           └────────────────────┘
                  │ Board set up by│
                  │ Department   │
                  └──────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
                  ┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
                  │ Decision     │───────►│ Assessment   │
                  │ communicated to│       │ documentation │
                  │ relevant      │       │ retained by   │
                  │ Admissions office│     │ admisisons    │
                  └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
                  ┌──────────────┐
                  │ Decision     │
                  │ communicated to│
                  │ applicant    │
                  └──────────────┘
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2. Assessment Boards

Programme entry request

Course leader for programme
Assistant Dean Academic Affairs
Admissions Officer or nominee

Module Exemption or credit request

Processed through existing Student Status Committee.

3. Assessment Criteria for Assessment Boards

The University RPL policy states that the evidence may be provided in a number of ways including:
- participation in exactly the same form of assessment as other students entering or already on the programme of study;
- portfolio;
- demonstrated skill or competence;
- reflective papers or journal articles that relate previous learning to the stated learning outcomes of the programme or module in question;
- evidence from the workplace or other setting where the student has applied their learning or competence;
- testimonials of learning or competence.

Assessment Boards will
- compare the evidence provided by the applicant with the stated learning outcomes specified for the programme and be satisfied that the applicant has achieved the equivalent of a passing grade
- if necessary require the applicant to provide additional supporting material or undertake a form of assessment determined by the board;
- in the case of module credits or exemptions, award a grade where such is feasible to enable the credit and grade to be used in the QCA calculation
- ensure that as a result of its decision, the QCA calculation of the final award will be based on not less than one-third of the total credits for the final part of the programme of study;
- ensure that normally applicants will be required to complete the final year of multiannual programmes
- identify a clear forward study path for the applicant;
- ensure that all documentation on the work of the board is retained;
- make a decision on the application;
- prepare a response that will be forwarded to the applicant if the request is not been granted in full.

4. Appeals Process

Anyone involved in the original assessment cannot sit on the appeals committee.

The office of the VPA&R will establish a RPL appeals committee consisting of two Assistant Deans Academic and an additional faculty member competent in the subject area of the application. The committee chair will be provided from the Office of the VPA&R.

- The appeals committee will consider the evidence provided by the applicant together with the recorded documentation of the assessment board.
- The committee may wish to interview the applicant.
- The committee may wish to refer to the relevant extern examiner.
- The committee will make a recommendation to the VPA&R
- The decision shall be final.

5. Additional Work to be completed

- Finance consulted in arriving at an appropriate fee
  - for the processing of applications
  - for awarding of credits
- Guidance Booklet produced for potential applicants
- Monitoring Committee established to review the process
- Support to faculty to assess learning portfolios.