



Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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1. REVISION HISTORY AND APPROVAL

Revision	Nature of change	Approval	Date
1.0	First Issue	JL	27/07/21
1.1	Feedback from David Westley, MDX and further alignment to MDX RPL Regulations	JL	25/05/23

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. The College recognises that learning can be accomplished in formal (for example affirmed capabilities), non-formal (for example working environment) and casual (experiential) ways and is open to considering applications for Recognition of Prior (certified and uncertified) for entry to programmes.
- 1.2. Consistent with College policy, and accepting validating body guidelines, several access and entry points can be accommodated.
- 1.3. This policy, based on Middlesex University Regulations and Section 4.4.2 - Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2013), Appraisals and Standards: Revised, 2013, outlines the prior learning practices and boundaries which are relevant as rules and limitations on RPL as characterised by Middlesex University and QQI which apply to Certified & Uncertified Learning provisions.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1. The College assesses RPL on a case by case basis comparing the content covered, the academic level of this content and assessment difficulty. The College reserves the right to refuse RPL requests if the evidence provided by the learner does not indicate an equivalent level of prior learning.
- 2.2. Recognition of Prior Learning (certified) will align with the NFQ/FHEQ and its award system. RPL will be permitted for admission to a programme, advanced admission to a programme and exemptions from a part of a programme. This gives applicants the opportunity to be exempt from completing modules on certain courses.
- 2.3. RPL will only be considered where it does not negatively impact the learning experience for the learner or on the programme. The College may request a learner to complete catch-up pieces to satisfy the course requirements as a condition of RPL.
- 2.4. It is the applicant's responsibility to make the initial request for RPL and to provide evidence of this prior certified learning within the timescale dictated by the College. Applicants will be informed of time limits or any other restrictions associated with submitting a claim.
- 2.5. The applicant must complete the Course Comparison form provided by the College and indicate in detail the relevant prior learning, as well as submitting all relevant documentation for assessment of prior learning.
- 2.6. Where it is required that the provider sets and/or grades assessments as part of the RPL process, a fee may be charged for this.
- 2.7. The administrative staff involved in the process will inform applicants of their obligations in participating in the RPL process and clear guidelines on the criteria will be provided. The following criteria apply
 - Exemptions can only be granted for an entire module and not just components of it
 - The application process and prior learning assessment mechanisms are clarified
 - Where it is not possible to grade an exception, the potential implication for award classification will be discussed
- 2.8. Ungraded credit taken will contribute to the satisfaction of the criteria for a qualification, but will not contribute grades for the classification of qualifications, however, for MDX programmes the principles of grade classification must apply. For example, for entrants with 60 RPL credits to MSc CBT: In order to get a distinction, a student would need to get a distinction grade in 50% (or more) of the 60 taught credits that they undertake with PCI, plus get a distinction in the dissertation.
- 2.9. Academic staff involved in assessing the prior learning experience are trained and qualified to assess such applications.
- 2.10. External Examiner approval should be sought for any credit awarded (certified and non-certified) level 5 (FHEQ)/level 7 (NFQ) and above. Where there are very similar applications, it is appropriate to seek blanket approval for a particular form of entry by certified learning.

3. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING – UNCERTIFIED (RPL)

- 3.1. A learner may be exempted from participating in a module if they have already attained the minimum intended module learning outcomes. The demonstrable prior learning should be a sufficiently good match to the minimum intended module learning outcomes to justify exemption from the module in the context of the overall programme.
- 3.2. In the particular case where the relevant prior learning is uncertified (e.g. prior experiential learning), the provider should assess the learner using the regular module assessment instruments and/or by an alternative assessment arrangement. Learners who are assessed to have demonstrated the required learning are granted the available credit for the module and are exempt from the module. Furthermore, a grade (percentage mark or alphabetic grade) should be available in principle. However, providers may choose not to grade if the assessment arrangement might not provide grading which is consistent with the regular assessment instruments. A fee may be charged for this process.
- 3.3. If the module is one which contributes to the award classification, prior learning achievement must be graded in order for the award to be classified. Otherwise, an unclassified award should be made. (QQI)
- 3.4. Ungraded credit taken will contribute to the satisfaction of the criteria for a qualification, but will not contribute grades for the classification of qualifications, however, for MDX programmes the principles of grade classification must apply. For example, for entrants with 60 RPL credits to MSc CBT: In order to get a distinction, a student would need to get a distinction grade in 50%(or more) of the 60 taught credits that they undertake with PCI, plus get a distinction in the dissertation.
- 3.5. Where the module does not contribute to the award classification, the prior learning achievement does not need to be graded.
- 3.6. When a grade is not assigned, the result for learners who demonstrate the required learning should be returned as Exemption Granted. Where a grade is awarded, it can be used in compensation etc., as with any regularly passed module. (QQI)
- 3.7. Where grading is not feasible, there may be circumstances in which a learner might be advantaged by waiving a right to exemption to enable award classification. The provider should foresee and provide for such situations, and should also ensure that learners are aware of any such consequences. (QQI)
- 3.8. The External Examiner will be involved in decisions related to RPL assessments at level 5 FHEQ/level 7 NFQ and above.

4. CREDIT TRANSFER - GENERAL

- 4.1. Credit for prior learning (certificated or uncertificated) which can be counted, within certain rules, towards a qualification.
- 4.2. A student may be permitted to transfer credit from PCI College or another institution, (whether awarded on the basis of certificated or experiential learning), provided:
 - a) That the levels of this study can be established;
 - b) not more than two thirds of the total required for a qualification is transferred in this way except that a sandwich programme of study may specify a minimum requirement of 120 credits (ie one quarter) when a placement has already been completed
- 4.3. Ungraded credit taken will contribute to the satisfaction of the criteria for a qualification, but will not contribute grades for the classification of qualifications.

5. CREDIT TRANSFER - QQI

- 5.1. A learner may be exempted from participating in a module if they have already attained the required credits at the appropriate level for the programme that they are applying. Evidence of the credit achievement must be provided as part of the application.
- 5.2. There are two scenarios of prior certified learning.
 - 5.2.1. Scenario 1:
 - The learning is certified by an awarding body in the form of a major award (e.g. a higher certificate or bachelor's degree) or is included as part of such an award.
 - Subject to QQI Sectoral Convention 5, an exemption may be granted for a module if the learner demonstrates the minimum intended module learning outcomes. For learners who demonstrate the required learning, the result should be returned as Exemption Granted. The learner should not be granted any ECTS credit because credit has already been granted in the prior qualification.
 - If the module is one that would normally contribute to the award classification, such exemption should only entitle a learner to an unclassified award unless it is feasible to recognise, or award, a grade. Any grade awarded/recognised should be consistent with the prior award classification and the module grades in the associated Europass Diploma Supplement.
 - 5.2.2. Scenario 2:
 - The learning is certified by an awarding body in the form of a minor, special purpose or supplemental award or it is certified in respect of a period of study, and the relevant credit has not already been used to meet the credit requirements for a major award.
 - This case of prior certified learning can be handled in the same way as prior uncertified learning with one exception: the provider should not require the learner to undergo assessment provided that the attainment of the minimum intended module learning outcomes can be demonstrated. However, where there is a need for a grade to be assigned — e.g. where it contributes to an award classification — assessment may be necessary. The learner may transfer their credit. A grade is available in principle, but providers may choose not to grade. If the credit has been used then Scenario 1 applies. consistency with the grading in regular assessment instruments cannot be assured.
 - For learners who demonstrate the required learning but are not graded, the result should be returned as Exemption Granted.

6. CREDIT TRANSFER – MDX REGULATIONS

- 6.1. The minimum number of credits which must be under Middlesex control is normally 33.3% of the total required for the qualification
- 6.2. For the Use and Re-use of Credit the following principles shall apply:
 - i. Normally, credits utilised in attaining an initial qualification recognised by the FHEQ cannot be used to secure exemptions against parts of an award of Middlesex University of equivalent or lower status. Such credits are considered 'spent' as part of the certification of the initial award.
 - ii. Such credits, however, may contribute to a higher award in the context that the higher qualification subsumes the lower. Illustrations of this would be:
 - A student who achieves a Foundation degree can use relevant credit towards an Honours degree, but not towards another Foundation Degree/HND/ DipHE.

- Credits obtained in attaining a sub-degree award or qualification can be used towards an Honours degree. Once an Honours degree has been awarded it cannot normally provide credit towards another Honours degree.
- Although at the same level in the FHEQ, a student may utilise credit from a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma to contribute to a Master's degree.
- Credit 'spent' on the conferment of an undergraduate award may not be used to meet the requirements of a postgraduate award.
- Normally, credit towards a new qualification must have been gained no more than five years before the programme of study commences.

7. LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Linked Policies	Transfer and Progression Policy Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Learner Support Policy Assessment of Learners Policy
Linked Procedures	Access, Applications and Admissions Policy Transfer and Progression Procedure Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure Support for Learners Procedure Assessment of Learners Procedure