



TUS

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre, An tIarthar Láir

Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest

TUS Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning 2026 - 2030



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1.0 Introduction

The Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (hereafter referred to as TUS) supports the recognition of prior learning (hereafter RPL) achieved by learners. This is to enable their ongoing engagement in future learning opportunities. This is consistent with the strategic ambition of TUS to widen the enrolment of and participation of learners in all types of learning opportunities in TUS.

In doing so, TUS provides the opportunity for prior learning to be recognized.

A fundamental principle of the Recognition of Prior Learning is that learning that has been previously achieved does not require re-learning. This policy sets out how TUS can facilitate the recognition of such learning, including formal, non-formal, informal and experiential learning through an RPL policy and process. This demonstrates TUS's commitment to ensuring that the achievements, attainments, skills, and talents of learners are formally recognised effectively and efficiently.

2.0 Definition of RPL

The recognition of prior learning is a process by which prior learning is formally valued. It is a means by which prior learning is identified, assessed and recognized by an educational institution as part of its programmes, courses and/or modules on Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications.

RPL makes it possible for an individual to build on learning achieved and to be rewarded for by receiving formal recognition for a range of relevant learning that may have been gained and which may now be used for access, transfer, and progression purposes to higher education. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate the prior learning, by preparing and submitting adequate evidence of their prior learning to the university.

3.0 Scope of the RPL Policy

This RPL policy and procedure applies to all applicants seeking recognition of prior learning to TUS undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research programmes, except where limitations to the application of RPL may apply to specific programmes of study.

4.0 The Legal and Quality Assurance Frameworks Governing RPL

The *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*¹ sets

¹ [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#)

out the statutory basis for QQI's engagement with RPL through its responsibility to establish policies and criteria for access, transfer, and progression for education providers. In line with Section 56 (1), (2), (3) of the 2012 Act, the *TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes*² include statements on credit accumulation, credit transfer, and identification and formal assessment of the knowledge, skill and competence previously acquired by learners.

5.0 Types of Learning Recognised

The learning recognized through the RPL process can be categorized as accredited or experiential.

Accredited learning relates to prior formal learning and for which certification has been awarded through another educational institution or education/training provider.

Experiential Learning: relates to prior un-certified learning which may be non-formal or informal learning attained through experience. Non-formal learning is planned, structured learning that does not lead to credits on a framework of qualification and/or awards. Examples of this include in-house company training, non-credited Run-EU participation etc. Informal learning is knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through day-to-day unplanned and unstructured activities. Examples include working, volunteering, day-to-day activities conducted in the workplace etc.

These are summarized in Table 1.

Summary of Types & Form of Recognition within RPL of Learning	
Type of Learning	Recognition
Formal Learning	Accredited
Non-formal Learning	Experiential
Informal Learning	

6.0 Purpose of the RPL Policy

The purpose of RPL is to enable prospective and current students to consider their prior learning as a valuable mechanism to enable entry or gain recognition for further education opportunities. The circumstances in which prior learning can be recognised include in summary:

² [TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programme](#)

- 1) Non-standard entry to an academic programme;
- 2) advanced entry to an academic programme;
- 3) seeking exemptions or credits for modules where there is evidence that the learning outcomes of that module have been previously attained by the applicant.
 - a) **Non-Standard Entry to a programme:** All programmes have entry criteria aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications. In TUS, RPL may be used as an alternative means to satisfy the programme entry criteria. It can be used to gain admission to an academic programme where the applicant does not meet the standard published admissions criteria or qualifications for access to the programme.
 - b) **Advanced Entry into a programme:** Advanced entry is where an applicant joins a programme in a Stage other than the entry stage. An applicant will be considered for advanced entry to an academic program where prior learning is assessed and recognized. A learner must demonstrate that they have already achieved the learning outcomes associated with all modules for the stage for which they are seeking an exemption.
 - c) **Granting of Exemptions or Credits:** An exemption is granted for one or more modules in a stage or stages of a programme where a learner can demonstrate that they have prior achievement of the learning outcomes associated with such modules. A registered student can apply for an exemption for a module(s) on evidencing this prior learning, which can be accredited or experiential

7.0 Principles to support the application of RPL in TUS

The following principles apply in the application of RPL in TUS:

- a) TUS supports and encourages the recognition of prior learning which students may have achieved prior to registering on their TUS programme of study
- b) TUS, through RPL, allows for learning to be measured and recognized irrespective of where or how it has been achieved
- c) The type of learning to be recognized must be evidenced by the applicant for RPL through an application and supporting documentary evidence
- d) TUS provides RPL as a legitimate means of enabling access to programmes and of having the credit associated with the prior learning applied towards the programme credit requirements
- e) Prior learning can include formal/accredited learning, and/or non-formal, informal, or experiential learning

- f) In the case of recognising certified learning, the credits given under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) framework, or other articulation framework, may be recognised or transferred to the programme of study but no further credits will be awarded.
- g) There is an upper limit that not more than 50% of the total credits of programme may be exempted through RPL.
- h) Applicants who have successfully completed a TUS Postgraduate Diploma may apply for Advanced Entry to a TUS Masters Programme where 60 taught ECTS credits of the Masters programme are the same as the 60 ECTS credits of the Postgraduate Diploma. Admission to the Master's programme may be granted by way of Advanced Entry to applicants who have successfully completed the relevant Postgraduate Diploma. The 60 ECTS shall be recognised as contributing to the attainment of the Master's award and transferred accordingly. The upper limit of 50% of the total credits of a programme which may be exempted through RPL does not apply in this circumstance.
- i) For research degree programmes (Level 9 and Level 10):
 - RPL via Non-Standard Entry or Advanced Entry into a programme shall only be considered for research degree programmes on a case by case basis;
 - RPL via the granting of Exemptions or Credits shall be available for taught programme elements, with a limit of up to 50%, where applicable;
 - RPL via the granting of Exemptions or Credits for research programme elements shall not be available.
- j) TUS will ensure that an RPL decision is made by designated TUS staff based on academic judgment in the achievement of the module learning outcomes.

8.0 Module(s) Exemptions in RPL

All modules taken by a student contribute to the volume of credit necessary to receive an award at a given level, subject to the details of the approved programme schedule. However, not all modules in a programme need to be considered when determining the classification of an award (TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes). RPL may be applied to accredited TUS modules or programmes. Recognition or exemptions will only be given:

- a) for complete modules;
- b) where the learning outcomes for the module have been achieved;
- c) Where the module does not contribute to the award classification, the prior learning achievement does not need to be graded
- d) For research degree programmes (Level 9 and Level 10), RPL shall only be

available for taught programme elements, with a limit of up to 50%, where applicable.

8.1 Award Classifying Modules in RPL

Award classifying modules are those modules that are considered in determining the classification of an award and are clearly signaled in the module descriptor and the approved programme schedule (TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes). In accordance with QQI Sectoral Conventions (Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022), if the module being exempted is one which contributes to the award classification, prior learning achievement must be graded for the award to be classified. Otherwise, an unclassified award should be made.

In accordance with *TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes*,³ where a student is exempted from part of the programme of study on the basis of credit transfer or recognition of prior learning, marks obtained for such prior learning are not used for award classification calculation purposes except:

- where it is agreed as part of an inter-institutional agreement that they are so used; and/or
- where the Department concerned has attributed a definite mark in respect of the accredited prior learning.

9.0 Special Regulation for RPL using TUS Special Purpose Awards

9.1 TUS Special Purpose Awards may be used to accumulate credits from prior certified learning, using the TUS RPL Exemptions Process, towards achieving the following awards:

- a) a Graduate Certificate (Special Purpose Award, 30 Credits);
- b) a Major Award, including Level 6 Higher Certificate, Level 7 Degree, Level 8 Honours Degree, Level 8 Higher Diploma or Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma.

The use of this Special Regulation to achieve exemptions for the awards listed shall be indicated prospectively as a planned part of programme design, at the point of programme validation.

The prior certified learning (in the form of a TUS Special Purpose Award) may entitle an Applicant to Exemptions on the relevant programme and the associated credits will be transferred by the learner from the Special Purpose Award to the

³ Ibid., 4.

respective Award (Graduate Certificate or Major Award). Applicants will be made aware of the implications of such credit transfer.

- 9.2 An award as listed in Section 9.1 may be developed such that:
- a) *TUS Special Purpose Awards* may be used for *all the Award Classifying Modules* of the respective award. The intended minimum Award Programme Learning Outcomes are achieved by a candidate who meets the minimum intended learning outcomes of all award classifying modules undertaken during the TUS Special Purpose Award.
 - b) *TUS Special Purpose Awards* may be used for *a designated number of the Award Classifying Modules* of the respective award in conjunction with a *Mandatory Capstone Module* (5, 10 or 15 ECTS) depending on the specific programme context. The Capstone Module integrates the learning attained in the constituent modules of the Special Purpose Awards so that the intended Minimum Programme Learning Outcomes of the Award are supported. Such a Capstone Module may contribute to the 60 Credits of the associated award stage, or may be in addition to the 60 Credits.
 - c) In accordance with *QQI Assessment and Standards (Revised 2022)*, there is appropriate coherence and cohesion in the award as a whole, and, where the award includes choice from a range of electives, *“the aggregation of electives must be regulated and consistent with the programme design and comprehended by the programme”*.
- 9.3 Where an RPL application is made based on learning accredited by *TUS Special Purpose Awards*, module exemptions will only be given:
- a) for complete Modules; and
 - b) where the minimum intended learning outcomes for the Module(s) have been achieved.
- 9.4 Candidates may achieve a Classified or Unclassified Award depending on the specific Programme context and this shall be highlighted to Applicants in the relevant Programme information literature.
- a) for a classified award, the Grade achieved by the learner for the respective Module(s) on the *TUS Special Purpose Awards* shall be entered for the Module(s) for which an RPL exemption has been granted.
 - b) for an unclassified award, a Grade denoted X (Exemption) shall be entered for the Module(s) for which an RPL exemption has been granted.

- 9.5 Applicants may apply for RPL for *prior accredited learning* in the form of Special Purpose Awards from other higher education Institutions in accordance with the provisions of this RPL Policy. In such instances, exemptions will only be granted:
- a) for complete Modules; and
 - b) where the minimum intended learning outcomes for the Module(s) have been achieved;
 - c) for a maximum of 50% of the total credits associated with the Award's Classifying Modules

10.0 The RPL Process

The RPL process key stages include: (1) an application; (2) an assessment of eligibility for the recognition of the type of learning presented in the application; (3) a decision on the eligibility of the application; (4) A review on decisions that are appealed by the applicant, where relevant.

10.1 Stage 1: Applications for RPL

An application for the RPL must be made by the applicant who is advised to speak with Head of Department/Programme coordinator in advance of submitting the application. Therefore, the application process is aligned to the ***purpose of the application for RPL***, as noted in Section 6, that is: (i) for non-standard entry; (2) for advanced entry; (3) for exemptions from modules on the programme for which the applicant is enrolled.

a) Application for Non-Standard Entry

To make an application under the RPL for non-Standard Entry the applicant must:

- 1) Make an application to enter the programme under the normal application process;
- 2) Complete the RPL Application Form (See Appendix C) and submit it to the relevant Admissions Office/Faculty Office;
- 3) If the application includes non-formal or informal learning, the RPL Experiential Learning Portfolio (see Appendix D) should also be completed. Applications for *Non-standard Entry* should be made in the academic year prior to the year of entry. Prior learning must be evidenced through identifying, documenting, assessing, and certifying the learning outcomes achieved by the applicant.

b) Application for Advanced Entry

To make an application under RPL for Advanced Entry the applicant must:

- 1) Make an application to enter the programme under the normal application

process;

- 2) Complete the RPL Application Form (See Appendix C) and submit it to the relevant Admissions/Faculty Office;
- 3) If the application includes non-formal or informal learning the RPL Experiential Learning Portfolio (see Appendix D) should also be completed. Applications for *Advanced Entry* should be made in the Semester prior to commencement of the programme. Prior learning must be evidenced through identifying, documenting, assessing, and certifying the learning outcomes achieved by the applicant.

c) Application for Module Exemptions

To make an application under RPL for Module Exemptions the applicant must:

- 1) Initially register and pay fees for their chosen programme of study;
- 2) Complete the RPL Application Form (See Appendix C) which should normally be submitted to the relevant department office before the end of the second week of the semester in which a module is taken;
- 3) If the application includes non-formal or informal learning the RPL Experiential Learning Portfolio (see Appendix D) should also be completed. Prior learning must be evidenced through identifying, documenting, assessing, and certifying the learning outcomes achieved by the applicant;
- 4) If the applicant is seeking an exemption from a module(s) where teaching has commenced on the Semester/Stage, the applicant should register and continue to engage in such module(s) until they receive the decision on their exemption application.

d) Evidence to support an application for RPL for non-accredited learning.

RPL through non-formal and informal learning will be assessed based on documentation provided by way of the submission of an Experiential Learning Portfolio. The applicant is required to initiate the process by:

- 1) submitting application for the Recognition of Prior Learning (see Appendix C);
- 2) submitting an Experiential Learning Portfolio which contains a collection of information and documentation providing the evidence of the learning to support the application (See Appendix D). An application will include the following applicable information and supporting documentation which will be required to assess the prior learning:
 - Completion of Experiential Learning Portfolio application form, complete with the necessary documentation to evidence the experiential learning.

- Workplace Documentation, job description, performances appraisals and reviews, Curriculum Vitae, including academic and work experience;
- Reflective Journal of Learning achieved: a reflective account detailing experiences and skills developed over time. Include specific examples of how the experiences relate to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the intended programme/module
- Community or Volunteer Work evidenced through documentation of skills gained through volunteering/community work. Letters from organisations or clients can support this alongside project outcomes
- Evidence of Self-Directed Learning such as online courses, MOOCs or certifications. Certificates of Completion, summaries of knowledge gained.
- Any other evidence considered relevant by the applicant to support the evidence of Experiential Learning.

10.2 Stage 2: Assessment of the eligibility of Applications for RPL

The assessment of applications to have prior learning recognized is conducted by the Faculty in which the programme that the applicant is seeking RPL on is located and is based on the information provided by the applicant.

The assessment of prior learning is based on evidence of the learning outcomes an applicant has achieved previously using standards of knowledge, skills and competence that are aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications as articulated in the programme/module learning outcomes.

The following criteria are used in the assessment of the information presented by mapping the learning achieved to the module learning outcomes:

- a) Validity: does the prior learning presented represent the learning outcomes relevant to the discipline, level, module and programme for which recognition is being sought?
- b) Sufficiency: is there enough evidence presented to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes?
- c) Authenticity: can the prior learning be uniquely, verifiably, and clearly attributed to the applicant?
- d) Reliability: is the evidence of prior learning reliable and reputable?
- e) Currency: is the learning current, applicable, and reigning?

10.3 Stage 3: Decision on the eligibility of an Application for RPL

A decision on the application should normally be made within three weeks from the date of receipt of the completed documentation from the applicant and is communicated to the applicant by the relevant Faculty/Admissions office.

If there is a delay in the process, the applicant should be notified in writing of an expected decision date.

The original Application and Learning Portfolio documentation, is available to external examiners if required.

The exempted credits for modules attract the same fee as for modules that would have to be completed.

10.4 Stage 4: Review of a Decision on an Application for RPL

An applicant is entitled to seek a review of a decision where they feel that the assessment of their RPL application, is not satisfactory.

The review will:

- a) consider and review the RPL Assessment Process and ensure all rules of the TUS RPL policy have been applied fairly;
- b) assess if there are any extenuating circumstances that should be considered;
- c) reach a final internal decision under the TUS RPL policy.

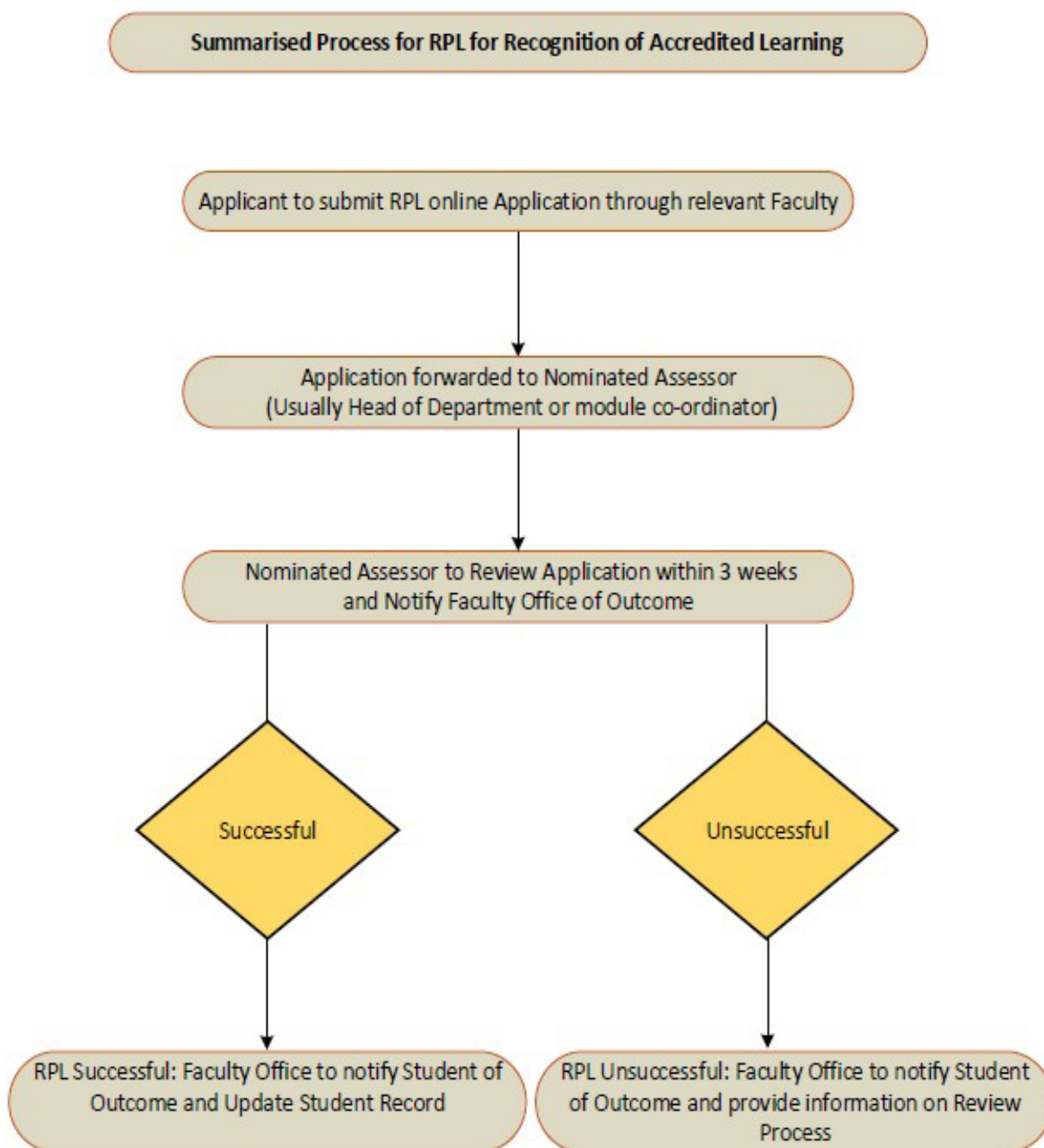
If necessary, the applicant may be contacted for further information or to clarify points already raised.

If an applicant chooses to seek a review, the request must comply with the following:

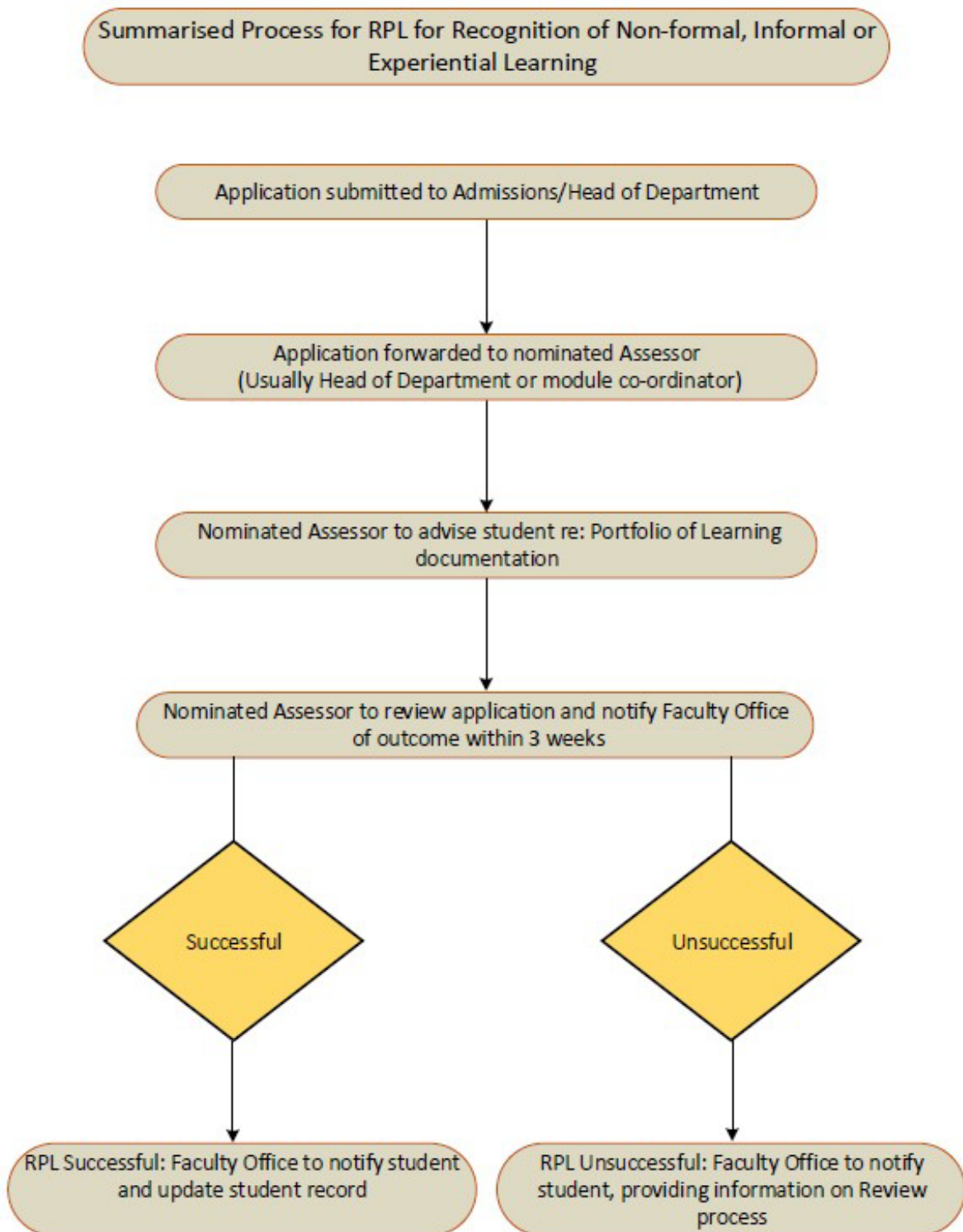
- a) The review form must be received in writing (either e-mail or hard copy) to the Dean of Faculty office within 5 working days of receipt of the original decision stating how the applicant considers the application to have been unfairly considered.
- b) The review form (Appendix E: RPL Review form) should be accompanied by any relevant supporting documentation which was not submitted with the original application.
- c) The Dean of Faculty shall convene an impartial review board which will consist of staff who were not involved in making the original decision, and shall comprise the following who are not members of the department in which the appellant is registered:
 - Dean of Faculty/School;
 - Head of Department;

- Academic member of staff.
- e) The Review Board shall complete the review within 10 working days.
- f) The decision relating to the review will be communicated to the applicant in writing (either e-mail or hard copy) within 15 working days of the receipt of the review request.

Appendix A: Summarised Process for RPL for Recognition of Accredited Learning



Appendix B: Summarised Process for RPL for recognition of non-formal, informal or experiential learning



Appendix C: RPL Application Form



Application Form for Recognition of Prior Learning

PART A

1.0 Personal Details

Name	
TUS Student Number (if available)	
Address:	
Contact Number:	
E-mail Address	

2.0 Basis of The Application for the Recognition of Prior Learning

Please fill in the details on the Programme, Stage or Module(s) for which you are seeking the recognition of prior learning.

Basis on which the Recognition of Prior Learning is sought. Please refer to Policy for Types of RPL (Select one option below):					
Non Standard Entry		Advanced Entry		Granting Exemptions/Credits	
Programme name on which exemptions are sought:					
Module Title(s) for which Exemption or Credit is Sought (List below)	Level of Module	Basis for Exemption: - Certified Learning - Experiential Learning	Documentation Included (please tick box)		
			Syllabus	Transcript of Results	Learning Portfolio

Note: Based on the type of RPL you are applying for different criteria will be applied in the assessment of your application.

3.0 Education, Training and Professional Qualifications

Second Level Education:

Name of School		
Address of School		
Attended	From Date:	To Date:

Second Level Qualifications:

Subject	Level	Grade obtained	Year of Qualification

Third Level Education:

This includes attendance on courses in any third level provider. Please start with your highest qualification:

Name of HEI:			
Address of HEI:			
Attended	From Date:	To Date:	
Name of Course			
Examination Result			
Subject	Level	Grade	Year

Declaration

Applicant Name:	
I submit application documentation in accordance with the Technological University's requirements. I accept that any advice or instruction given to me by TUS or its staff in preparing the application does not confer any entitlement to credit/ exemption.	
Signature:	
Date:	



Application for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning Portfolio

What is a Learning Portfolio?

A learning portfolio is the formal documentary evidence submitted by the applicant of relevant information and documentation to support their request for the recognition of prior learning. The learning identified by the applicant must be supported by documentary evidence in Section.

The Learning Portfolio allows the assessor to make an informed judgement on the nature and type of prior learning that can be formally recognised as having been achieved. The nature and extent of information submitted by an applicant will differ depending on the degree and type of learning that the applicant wishes to have formally recognised. During the assessment process of prior experiential learning, the assessing Department may require the applicant to supply further information in addition to that submitted as part of the learning portfolio. This could take the form of a written submission or interview or other methodology, as appropriate.

This learning portfolio is to be used by applicants in order to provide the evidence of *Prior Experiential Learning*.

Prior Experiential Learning Syllabus Mapping

In this section you are asked to compare your learning achieved to the Learning Outcomes of the subject in question. Please verify that you have the most current version of the Learning Outcomes (these are subject to regular update). Please use a separate page for each Learning Outcome and response, using the format below.

Table of Learning Outcomes based on Prior Experiential Learning	
<i>Present your understanding of the learning outcome. Bring in an example from your work/life practice to illustrate what you are saying and demonstrate what you understand</i>	
Learning Outcome	Document how this learning outcome was achieved:
Learning Outcome 1:	
Learning Outcome 2:	
Learning Outcome 3:	
Learning Outcome 4:	
Learning Outcome 5:	
Insert rows for additional learning outcomes as necessary	

Additional Learning Portfolio Documentation required

- Workplace Documentation, job description, performances appraisals and reviews, Curriculum Vitae, including academic and work experience.
- Reflective Journal of Learning achieved: a reflective account detailing experiences and skills developed over time. Include specific examples of how the experiences relate to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the intended programme/module.
- Community or Volunteer Work evidenced through documentation of skills gained through volunteering/community work. Letters from organisations or clients can support this alongside project outcomes.
- Evidence of Self-Directed Learning such as online courses, MOOCs or certifications. Certificates of Completion, summaries of knowledge gained.
- Any other evidence considered relevant by the applicant to support the evidence of Experiential Learning.

All relevant documentation must be submitted at the time of application.

Declaration:	
<p>I wish to claim credit/ exemption based on my prior experiential learning in respect of this RPL application.</p> <p>I submit application documentation in accordance with the Technological University's requirements. I accept that any advice or instruction given to me by TUS or its staff in preparing the application does not confer any entitlement to credit/ exemption in respect of the subject listed below.</p> <p>I enclose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed RPL Application Form • Experiential Learning Portfolio Documentation <p>I certify that all information submitted with this application is an accurate description of my relevant learning to date.</p>	
Signature:	
Date:	

|<----- For Office Use Only----->|

List of Items Submitted as Evidence	Date Original Seen	Verified by



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Review Application Form

Note: This review application form should be emailed to your relevant Faculty office.

1. Applicants' personal details

Name:	
TUS Student Number:	
Email:	
Phone Number:	

2. Review information: Please give details on the grounds of which you are requesting this review in the box below and attach any supporting documentation:

3. Applicant Declaration:

All information provided in this RPL review application is, to my knowledge, accurate, true and correct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____