

(Author)

Graduate Studies Committee

(Title of Item)

Minor amendment to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy for Admission to Research Degrees

Submitted to Academic Board 16-09-15

Action requested approve

Background rationale

Continuous improvement

Alignment to Strategic Objectives/External Policy Driver

Government policy aspires to widening participation. Consequently education providers, including higher education, must acknowledge the significance of learning obtained in a breadth of contexts prior to admission and formulate policies to enable formal recognition of such learning. *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy for Admission to Research Degrees* is a procedure to be followed in those rare cases where candidates, who do not hold a primary degree, apply for admission to a research degree.

Resource Implications None

Brief description / summary of the item

Academic Council 21-06-13 approved the *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy for Admission to Research Degrees* (appended).

The Policy states that in exceptional cases UCC may consider applications onto research programmes from candidates who have not completed a primary degree. The assessment process in place is rigorous and involves submission of a detailed portfolio and interview before a recommendation

issues to the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee (ACGSC) for consideration. Final approval is then sought from Academic Board

Having been through two years of implementation (in which 6 students have been admitted through RPL) it would appear that having to get final approval from Academic Board is perhaps excessive and hence ACGSC is proposing to Academic Board/Council that final approval in these cases should rest with ACGSC.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy for Admission to Research Degrees

In exceptional cases, UCC may consider applications from candidates who have highly successful relevant professional experience and achievement in their chosen subject or other related areas but who have not completed a primary degree, or otherwise do not meet the specified entry criteria for a Masters (Research) or Doctoral Degree. In such cases, a significant body of evidence of alternative prior experiential learning must be submitted for consideration. Applicants for a PhD Degree may be recommended to register for a Masters by Research degree, which they may be required to complete, or they may be allowed to transfer to a PhD registration if their progress is deemed sufficient, following a review at the end of the first or second year of study.

The admission process will consist of submission of a portfolio, along with the application form, an interview process and consideration by ACGSC.

Candidates for admission to a research degree based on relevant professional experience must submit a portfolio which includes:

1. A Full Current Curriculum Vitae
2. Evidence of all educational achievement to date, which will be expected to be in the upper levels of achievement for that stage of education, as determined by the approving body discussed below.
3. Detailed account of relevant experience:
 - I. typically 5 years for Masters, 10 years for PhD in relevant work area (may be reduced in exceptional cases depending on demonstrated achievement)
 - II. must provide evidence of independent work in an area related to the research topic (while noting that some details of, for example, industrial work may be confidential)
 - III. must provide evidence of research- or enquiry-based activity which has been independently validated in terms of quality
 - IV. should provide evidence and samples of professional written, creative or other relevant output (e.g., reports, papers, books, creative output)

4. A 3000-5000-word project proposal, prepared in discussion with a supervisor(s), which demonstrates
 - I. knowledge and appropriate understanding of the proposed research topic
 - II. the proposed approach to addressing the research question appropriate for degree sought
 - III. a standard of writing and presentation skills fitting for degree sought

5. Names of two referees (outside UCC) who will be asked to complete a reference form on which they will be asked to comment on the candidate's suitability to undertake a complete a research degree in the chosen area under a number of specific headings.

Applications must be endorsed by the relevant Head of School/Department and Head of College and approved by the relevant College committee, for subsequent consideration by the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee.

In each case, the Chair of ACGSC will send the material for review to two Professors or senior experienced academic staff members who have expertise in the broad discipline within which the candidate proposes to work, but are not in the same School/Department, have not been a member of the College committee which approved the application, and are otherwise free of conflicts of interest such that they can make a judgment on the material submitted as part of the application. This panel, chaired by the Head of the College Graduate School, will interview the applicant as part of their considerations and will independently provide recommendations as to whether the application should be approved to ACGSC, to be considered before making their final recommendation to Academic Board.

Academic Council 21-06-13