Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

1. Context

1.1   All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the Royal Irish Academy of Music, hereinafter referred to as RIAM or the Academy, are delivered by RIAM and validated by the Designated Awarding Body, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, hereinafter referred to as Trinity. The Academy recognises that knowledge and skills can be acquired from a range of learning experiences, including formal, non-formal and informal activities, and it is committed to ensuring that its Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy is compatible with its 'Admissions and Transfer' and 'Academic Assessment and Progression' policies and that it meets national and EU policy for good practice in the field.

2. Purpose

2.1   This policy provides a coherent framework for the assessment of prior learning to be approached in an equitable, transparent and consistent manner to be used by the Academy, and its students, for undergraduate and postgraduate courses whilst ensuring their academic integrity thus enabling achievement of their learning outcomes.

2.2   This policy is aligned with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) Policies, actions and procedures for the promotion of access, transfer and progression (March 2003) which was adopted by the QQI further to the introduction of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012.

3. Benefits

3.1   The Academy encourages lifelong learning and provides the opportunity for prior learning to be recognised. The policy facilitates student access and mobility in support of relevant national and European policies on education and training.

4. Scope

4.1   The policy applies to prospective undergraduate and postgraduate applicants seeking admission (including waiver of matriculation requirements) or advanced entry to the Academy's programmes of study.

4.2   The policy applies to existing students who may apply for exemption from a module successfully completed in another programme.

5. Definition

5.1   *Recognition of Prior Learning* is defined as a process whereby prior learning is given a value (European Commission 2008; NQAI, 2005; OECD 2004), in that RIAM adheres to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Recognition of Prior Learning can operate to provide recognition for advanced entry and non-standard admissions to educational pathways and can also be used to award credit for elements within programmes.

5.2   ***Prior learning*** encompasses the following forms:

(i)   ***Formal Learning*** takes place through programmes of education or training that are delivered by education and training providers. It is assessed and can lead to awards.

(ii)   ***Non-formal learning*** is learning which is acquired through planned activities alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal certification. Examples of non-formal learning include learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, in the voluntary sector, or in communities.

(iii)   ***Informal learning*** refers to learning acquired through day-to-day activities, life and work experience, also referred to as experiential learning, which may often be unplanned and unintentional. It may be assessed, but does not result in formal certification of achieved learning.

6. Principles

6.1   RIAM is committed to transparent and equitable treatment of applicants for RPL, as defined above, across all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and provides all stakeholders with clear information on the opportunities for RPL and on RPL procedures.

6.2   RIAM will provide applicants with clear information on the opportunities and processes for RPL prior to entry and during studies at the institution.

6.3   The Academy's assessment mechanism and criteria in respect of RPL are fairly and appropriately aligned with relevant module and programme learning outcomes. The policy supports learner mobility by the recognition of prior learning regardless of how, when, and where it was acquired, provided that the learning meets the relevant entry criteria for the programme and/ or its learning outcomes.

6.4   RPL seeks to provide applicants with the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of learning whilst ensuring the integrity of the Academy's academic standards, and those of Trinity as the Designated Awarding Body ,and ensuring consistency with those of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

6.5   RIAM will accommodate the flexibility of learners through RPL as far as is possible but recognises that some programmes are not suited for the granting of exemptions and/or to admission via RPL.

6.6   RIAM will not permit double counting of credit towards different academic awards and will not make a full award solely on the basis of RPL.

6.7   The policy and procedures for the recognition of prior learning are embedded within the Academy's quality assurance processes.

7. Policy

7.1   *Existing Students*

In relation to the application of RPL with respect to existing students seeking exemption for modules completed elsewhere:

(i)   Applicants will normally be allowed exemption for entire modules only, not parts of them where all learning outcomes of the module have been demonstrably achieved.

(ii)   Credit exemption for registered students will be set at 40 credits out of 240 credit programmes as a maximum; 20 credits out of 120 credit programmes as a maximum; and 10 credits out of 60 credit programmes as a maximum.

(iii)   The final recommendation on the level of credit to be exempted rests with the appropriate Head of Faculty.

(iv)   Credit exemptions for RPL purposes will not be considered for any modules in the final two years of an undergraduate programme level 8.

7.2   *Undergraduate Admission*

In relation to the application of RPL with respect to undergraduate admission:

(i)   All applications for advanced entry to an undergraduate programme supported by RIAM will be independently considered by the Trinity Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies for admission.

(ii)   RIAM may recognise formal, non-formal, informal, and prior learning for admission at undergraduate level at level 7 and 8.

(iii)   RIAM may recognise up to the first two years of study 120 ECTS (or equivalent credit) in respect of undergraduate advanced entry admission for Level 8 degree programmes (ie 240 ECTS). Normally, this will require formal prior learning.

(iv)   Students who meet the required admission requirements and who are allowed advanced entry will then complete at least two full academic years at the Academy in order to be eligible for consideration for an undergraduate degree.

7.3   *Postgraduate Admission*

In relation to the application of RPL with respect to postgraduate admission:

(i)   All applications for advanced entry to a postgraduate programme supported by RIAM will be independently considered by the Trinity Dean of Graduate Studies for admission.

(ii)   RIAM may recognise formal, non-formal, informal prior learning for postgraduate admission at level 9 or 10.

(iii)   When the duration of a full-time (ie 120 ECTS) postgraduate programme is two years or more, the Trinity Dean of Graduate Studies may recognise formal prior learning, for entry, of up to a maximum of 60 ECTS (or equivalent credit) or one year of study for advanced entry admission.

7.4   *Assessment criteria*

7.4.1   In assessing evidence of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning, the criteria for assessment should include: relevance, validity, sufficiency, authenticity, currency.

(i)   *Relevance*: the student/applicant will have to demonstrate how the evidence produced for formal, non-formal or informal learning relates to the learning outcomes of the module(s) and to the broader programme-level outcomes.

(ii)   *Validity*: the prior learning will match the required NQF level by meeting the relevant programme learning outcomes and will be demonstrated by valid mechanisms, which may include, but are not limited to assessment procedures.

(iii)   *Sufficiency*: the student/applicant must identify in sufficient detail how the prior certified or experiential learning equates in value with the programme learning outcomes for which credit is being claimed.

(iv)   *Authenticity*: the student must provide substantial and convincing legitimate evidence that the learning is that of the applicant.

(v)   *Currency*: the prior learning must have been achieved within a relatively recent timescale and, although the currency of the learning can depend on the particular discipline, it must fit with current knowledge and practice.

7.4.2   Decisions taken in respect to RPL shall be matters of academic judgment based on the application, audition where appropriate and evidential proof submitted

7.4.3   Suitable documentary evidence may include:

(i)   Certified learning, which should be evidenced by certified copies of qualifications, transcripts, detailed programme outlines indicating subjects studied and assessments undertaken, portfolios submitted and results obtained, and references from relevant programme leaders, tutors, and assessors, and submission of professional portfolios.

(ii)   Evidence of non-formal learning, which should be evidenced by course descriptions and durations with certificates of attendance (a certificate of attendance or participation does not constitute certification of achievement). Evidence of informal learning may include letters of reference/ verification, work-based portfolios, plans, designs and reports. All information should be submitted in English, or supported by certified translations.

(iii)   The format of additional evidence to be submitted in support of an application will be decided by the relevant Head of Faculty as appropriate for the programme element(s) to which the application relates. The potential formats include: written reports or essays, a portfolio of work, oral/ instrumental testing/ auditioning, viva voce or presentations, observation of performances etc.

7.4.4   The Head of Faculty relevant to the applicant's programme of study will consider written evidence of prior learning and achievement, practical demonstration of prior learning through a structured audition and diagnostic assessment, and verbal evidence of prior learning through a structured interview, as appropriate.

7.4.5   In the case of students applying for an exemption from a module, evidence relating to their application will, if required, be made available to the External Examiner of the student's programme of study on the recommendation of the relevant Head of Faculty.

7.4.6   In the case of applicants applying for admission with a waiver of matriculation requirements or for an advanced entry to undergraduate degree programme the case will be passed for determination to the Trinity Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies on the recommendation of the relevant RIAM Head of Faculty.

7.4.7   In the case of applicants applying for an advanced entry to postgraduate degree programme the case will be passed for determination to the Trinity Dean of Graduate Studies on the recommendation of the relevant RIAM Head of Faculty.

8. Procedure for Application for Recognition of Prior Learning

8.1   In order that RIAM may best support applicants for admission, the applicant must:

(i)   Read the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. Applicants may approach the Head of Faculty for further guidance.

(ii)   Supply all necessary evidence and documentation to support their application, and submit their learning evidence plus the completed official application form as early as possible, in advance of the commencement of the applicant's chosen programme of study, to the Administrative Officer, Registry for assessment by the relevant Head of Faculty.

8.2   The application for the recognition of prior or experiential learning for non-standard admission will be reviewed by the Non-standard Admission Committee in the Academy, which will consist of the following *ex officio* members: the RIAM Director (Chair), the relevant Head of Faculty, and the Administrative Officer (Registry) (Committee Secretary).

8.3   In the case where the Non-standard Admission Committee recommends an acceptance of the applicant, its recommendation, accompanied by supportive documentation, will be passed on for consideration to the Trinity Senior Lecturer for undergraduate admissions and to the Trinity Dean of Graduate Studies for graduate admissions. The determination of the Senior Lecturer or Dean of Graduate Studies is final.

8.4   Once the determination from the Trinity Senior Lecturer or the Trinity Dean of Graduate Studies, as relevant, is received, the Non-standard Admission Committee Secretary will inform the applicant of the result in line with the normal admission procedures in operation by the Academy.

8.5   In order that the Academy may best support students applying for credit at the module level the applicant must:

(i)   read the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy;

(ii)   submit an application form to the Administrative Officer (Registry).

8.6   An application for credit exemption for a particular module(s) will be considered by the Head of Faculty relevant to the student's programme of study. The application should be submitted within the first week after the commencement of the academic year but no later than three weeks into the programme. Until the determination is made the student must attend all modules of the programme.

8.7   Consideration of an application for the recognition of prior or experiential learning at the post-entry is undertaken by the Head of Faculty whose recommendation will be noted and approved by the Board of Studies and a final decision communicated to the Administrative Officer, Registry within a week after the receipt of the application.

8.8   Appeals mechanism

Applicants may appeal to the relevant Chair of the Board of Studies (undergraduate or postgraduate.

9. Responsibility

9.1   The RIAM Director is responsible for the implementation and integrity of the policy, which will be subject to three-yearly review.

9.2   The Head of Administrative Office (Registry) is responsible for data capture and updating documentation relating to RPL.

9.3   The Trinity Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies or the Trinity Dean of Graduate Studies are responsible in respect of the aspects discussed in 8.3.

10. Related Documents

10.1   [Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training NQAI 2005](#)

10.2   [Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012](#).

10.3   Admission and Transfer Policy and Procedure.

10.4   Academic Assessment and Progression Policy.

10.5   [Trinity's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#).

10.6   [QQI Green Paper on the Recognition of Prior Learning](#).

10.7   [QQI Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Restatement 2015](#), and associated [QQI Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training](#)

11. Document Control

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