



PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND REVIEW FRAMEWORK (PDARF)

Implementing the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*: Graduate taught pathway programmes @ UCD

Approved by Academic Council on 07 May 2015

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Effective from September 2016: this process will not be applied retrospectively where a Masters Degree has been awarded prior to the 2016/2017 academic session. It applies solely to students registering to an approved pathway programme from the 2016/17 academic session onwards.

- i. **Modules undertaken from September 2016/17 onwards:** in all cases the credits and grades for modules undertaken from September 2016/17 onwards as part of any earlier programme will count towards any later programme within an approved pathway programme. This includes situations where a student has received an earlier award(s).
- ii. **Modules undertaken in 2015/16 where a student registers to continue or complete a pathway programme from September 2016/17:** the relevant Programme Board* will determine whether the credits and grades for modules undertaken in 2015/16 as part of any earlier programme will count towards any later programme within an approved pathway programme. This includes situations where a student has received an earlier award(s).
- iii. **Modules undertaken prior to 2015/16 where a student registers to continue or complete a pathway programme from September 2016/17:** the relevant Programme Board will determine whether the credits and grades for modules undertaken prior to 2015/16 as part of any earlier programme will count towards any later programme within an approved pathway programme. This includes situations where a student has received an earlier award(s).

In all such cases the relevant Programme Board will apply the principles as set down under section 3: *Principles for the application of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy to approved UCD graduate taught pathway programmes.*

* Throughout this document, 'Programme Board(s)' is understood to refer to undergraduate and graduate Programme/ Graduate School Boards.

1. Context and purpose

UCD supports the fundamental flexibility and student mobility inherent in the Bologna principles. As such, UCD recognises the right of students to build their educational attainments through a number of different pathways, in terms of time/duration of study. This Programme Development, Approval and Review Framework (PDARF) information sheet:

- 1.1 Defines graduate taught pathway programmes at UCD in the context of the fundamental principles of the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*.
- 1.2 Sets out the principles for the application of the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy* to approved UCD graduate pathway programmes.

2. Definition of UCD graduate taught pathway programmes¹ (in the context of the fundamental principles of the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*)

2.1 Pathway programmes are **a sequence of UCD programmes at NFQ Level 9 that build to a Masters degree award** within that sequence and have been approved as a pathway programme by the University Programmes Board. Each programme in the sequence may operate as an entry and exit point. Pathway programmes encompass more than one UCD award, and each award will contribute to the overall academic coherence of the pathway.

2.2 Subject to currency of learning requirements as per item 5.3.2 in the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy* and the defined period of time for the pathway, the credits and grades for modules undertaken as part of any earlier programme will count towards any later programme within an approved pathway programme. This includes situations where a student has received an earlier award(s).

2.2.1 Only modules and grades counted towards the earlier award will apply to the later award.

2.3 Students must complete all the requirements for a later award in a pathway programme within the defined period of time for completing the later award, as approved by the University Programmes Board on the recommendation of the relevant Programme Board. This period of time starts at the point of first registration to the pathway programme. The period of time for completing the pathway programme will be stated in the programme specification as approved by the University Programmes Board.

2.3.1 There may be cases where previous UCD students apply with relevant previously awarded credits to be admitted to a pathway programme after the programme-specific defined period of time for completing the later award. In each individual case, it will be the responsibility of the relevant Programme Board to decide if the presented credits that were taken in earlier award(s) in the pathway meet the Programme Board requirements for disciplinary currency and/or relevance for inclusion in the pathway programme. Based on the approved criteria for the pathway programme and the requirements of item 5.3.2 of the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*, the Programme

¹ This definition has been adapted from the University of Melbourne (<http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1019> and <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1037>).

Board may decide to admit the applicant to the pathway programme or may recognise the prior learning as general credit towards a different programme.

2.4 A register of approved pathway programmes is maintained by UCD Registry. Only programmes approved to be on this register shall be deemed pathway programmes. To submit a taught Masters programme for approval as a pathway programme the pathways proposal form must be completed. This form is available from curriculum@ucd.ie.

3. Principles for the application of the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy* to approved UCD graduate taught pathway programmes

3.1 It should be the norm that students are able to accumulate GPA across phases of a UCD pathway programme, even if they have exited with a defined pathway award and subsequently re-entered that pathway programme.

3.2 There should be no benefit/disadvantage in terms of calculating award GPA for a student to complete a Masters pathway programme by exiting and entering at different stages as opposed to a student who completes the Masters programme in one continuous registration period. Students who have taken the same pathway programme in different ways will have their Masters award GPA calculation based on the same calculations.

3.2.1 In all cases, the Masters Degree award GPA will be based on the module GPA for all modules taken as part of the approved pathway programme.
a. This applies solely to students registering to an approved pathway programme from the 2016/17 academic session onwards.

3.3 Students who opt to exit a pathway programme at a particular exit point and subsequently re-enter the process may only carry credits and grades within a certain time limit specified by the relevant Programme Board.

3.4 Pathway programmes should be mapped up to Masters Degree level, which can be taken either in one year/sitting or allow students to exit at Certificate and Diploma NFQ level 9 awards.

3.5 Even if there are different routes within a defined pathway programme, the credit can only be used once towards the higher award. I.e. the credit and grades associated with any earlier NFQ Level 9 award can only be counted once towards the Masters Degree.

3.6 Students who complete an award cannot retrospectively be also given a lower defined pathway award.

3.7 Individual Programme Boards are responsible for ensuring coherence, transparency and fairness, and opportunities for progression in the pathways under their remit and in advising students on how to best negotiate different learning pathways.

3.8 The UCD Academic Transcript and/or Diploma Supplement should be used to reflect and clarify the unique personalised learning/achievement pathway undertaken by the student.

3.9 In the case of applicants to a UCD Masters pathway programme who have received an award from another higher level institution, the relevant Programme Board will permit both the credit and grades/grade equivalencies from the non-UCD award (in the form of a block of graded credit) to count towards the UCD Masters award where:

- 3.9.1 The Programme Board deems that the non-UCD award is equivalent, in terms of the level of learning and learning outcomes, to an earlier programme in the UCD pathway programme;
- 3.9.2 The learning has been achieved within the defined timeframe for the pathway programme; and
- 3.9.3 All the credits on the non-UCD award remain current and are counted towards the UCD Masters award.

3.10 Information about converting grades awarded by another higher level institution into UCD grades/grade equivalencies can be found at

http://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/documents/Non-UCD_RPL-conversion-guide.pdf.