

Document Title/Reference	Access, Transfer & Progression Policy
Purpose	To ensure fit-for-purpose student access, transfer and progression opportunities and programme delivery structures.
Scope	All phases of the student 'life cycle', e.g. student admission, progression and certification.
Contents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Policy Statement 2 Credit 3 Access <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Initial Access <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1.1 Meeting the Eligibility Criteria 3.1.2 Initial Access through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) 3.2 Module Credit/Advanced Access through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) 4 Transfer 5 Progression <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Progression Arrangements 5.2 Monitoring Student Performance 5.3 Flexible Learning Opportunities 6 Information Provision
Definitions	<p>Access: Process by which applicants enter a programme of study in the IPA. The IPA subdivides Access into two distinct categories: 1) <i>initial access</i>, ie. <u>entry</u> to the initial stage of a programme, and 2) <i>advanced access</i>, ie. access to a post-entry stage of a programme.</p> <p>Transfer: Process by which a student can transfer internally from one IPA programme to another by being awarded general credit (no grades associated with the grade) to recognise learning outcomes already achieved in the previous programme. External transfers are handled under the Institute's Access & Recognition of Prior Learning procedures.</p> <p>Progression: The means by which students, on successful completion of an IPA programme, can progress to another IPA programme. The Registrar's Office has established approved progression pathways between programmes, which are published in the IPA's Application Brochure.</p> <p>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): "The process by which prior learning is given a value. It is a means by which prior learning is formally identified, assessed and acknowledged" (NQAI, 2005). RPL encompasses all forms of prior learning, including formal/accredited learning (certified learning); non-formal/informal/experiential learning</p>

	(learning outside the formal education system, through the workplace and through experience).
Contextual Guidelines	<p>ESG 1.4 ‘Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification’</p> <p>QQI Core Guidelines 3.2 ‘Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition’</p> <p>QQI Policy Restatement: Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training</p> <p>Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, s.56 “Procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners”</p> <p>UCD RPL Policy (2016)</p> <p>UCD Protocol for Programme Transfer (2016)</p>
Related Policy	<p><i>Admission Policy & Criteria</i></p> <p><i>Learner Charter</i></p> <p><i>Recognition of Prior Learning Policy</i></p>
Audience & Communication	<p>Applicable to all Whitaker School staff and students</p> <p>The IPA policy on access, transfer and progression will be available in the student handbook and on the Institute’s website.</p>
Policy Owner & Implementation	<p>The Head of the Whitaker School has overall responsibility to ensure the policy on access, transfer and progression is embedded within the Institute’s structures.</p> <p>The policy is approved by IPA Faculty and implemented by Whitaker School staff.</p>
Key Implementation Actions	<p>The Registrar’s Office has policies and procedures on admission and recognition of prior learning to facilitate initial and advanced access to a programme.</p> <p>The Registrar’s Office establishes progression pathways between programmes, and determines a student’s eligibility to progress or transfer based on an assessment of their prior learning.</p> <p>Resources are allocated and flexible enrolment and delivery mechanisms are established to ensure that the learning environment supports access, transfer and progression.</p> <p>Information relating to programmes and arrangements for access, transfer and progression are available to prospective learners before enrolment.</p>

	<p>The Registrar’s Office will capture data on student progression: pass/failure rates, student transfers.</p>
<p>Monitoring, Review & Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>A detailed record of how many students take and complete courses by subject accumulation and the method by which they enter the IPA is held by the Registrar’s Office for the purposes of monitoring and benchmarking.</p> <p>Co-ordinators will review data on student progression (pass/failure rates) and identify patterns of concern and take action to remedy underlying causes as early as is practicable in conjunction with annual reviews.</p> <p>The policy will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated through internal processes and student feedback. Appropriate operational improvements will be made by the Head of Whitaker School, assistant registrar and programme co-ordinators to enhance the student learning experience.</p> <p>The policy will be evaluated every 3 years by the Head of Whitaker School, in conjunction with the assistant registrar and programme coordinators, as part of the cyclical review.</p>
<p>Revision History & Commencement Date & Date of Next Review</p>	<p>2006: Version 1 2010: Version 2 2016: Version 3 2017/18: Version 4</p> <p>Commencement Date (Version 4): 2018</p> <p>Date of Next Review: 2021</p>

Access, Transfer & Progression Policy

1 Policy Statement

Promoting accessibility for learners is a basic tenet of the Institute of Public Administration's mission. Entry arrangements are clear, decisions on allocation of places on programmes are transparent, and all applicants are treated in a fair, equal and consistent manner.

The IPA's admission criteria accommodates non-traditional students. There are Recognition of Prior Learning mechanisms in place to facilitate applicants who do not meet traditional entry criteria but who have achieved equivalent learning outcomes from informal/non-formal/experiential learning scenarios (learning outside the formal education system – workplace learning, life experience etc.).

The IPA follows the criteria enumerated in the QQI Policy restatement "Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training". The formal recognition of IPA programmes on the National Framework of Qualifications, and the IPA's system of formally allocating credits to learning outcomes facilitates the IPA's operation of advanced entry to a programme, transfer and progression arrangements.

The IPA recognises prior learning and operates fair, transparent and consistent arrangements for applicants who apply to gain credit from a programme or advanced entry to a programme on the basis of learning outcomes achieved elsewhere, whether in the formal education system or outside.

IPA supports the educational mobility of students. Learners are encouraged to progress through the various stages of the Institute's accredited programmes by providing them with clear goals (certificate, diploma, degree and other awards) and transparent paths of progression between programmes in an integrated framework. Progression is logical, stepped and achievable, made possible through careful course construction – connectivity between cognate subjects and progressive advances in knowledge, skills and competence. Appropriate student supports facilitate successful completion of each stage.

As a provider of professional education, the IPA enhances accessibility and progression by the provision of flexible quality education; the Institute has a teaching and learning regime that stimulates and supports 'life-long learners' and allows them to access a chosen course at a time and place that suits them, and at a pace that is in keeping with the student's personal and professional situation.

The IPA undertakes to provide comprehensive information on the possibilities for access, transfer and progression to learners and prospective learners through programme information and publicity documents and, where appropriate, in direct communication with them. The information provided will be up-to-date, accurate and clear and will enable potential applicants and existing students to make decisions regarding what and when to study.

2 Credit

- 2.1 An academic credit system introduces crucial flexibility into the academic journey of professional learners. Credits are the building blocks on which access, transfer & progression arrangements are based.
- 2.2 The IPA operates a system known as Subject Accumulation, which is based on the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). IPA modules are allocated credits, and students collect credits on successful completion of each module. Students are permitted to progress to another stage or programme on the progression pathway once they have successfully completed the required credit load. The credit system permits students to take a phased approach to their studies – Subject Accumulation – a student-oriented means of accommodating work and family pressures.
- 2.3 Pursuit of a programme through Subject Accumulation does not disadvantage students or confer extra privileges on them. They are bound by the same Marks & Standards and academic regulations as regular non-Subject Accumulation students.
- 2.4 The IPA recognises prior learning outcomes achieved by students in another higher education institution by assigning general credit towards the completion of an IPA programme.
- 2.5 The system is compatible with other ECTS credit systems in Ireland and the EU, and therefore facilitates student mobility.

3 Access

Access is the process by which external students enter a programme of study in the IPA. Access to third-level education is still commonly predicated on attainment in the Leaving Certificate. The IPA's mission as a public sector development agency is to educate a diverse range of public servants, working at every level, in different locations, and coming from different social and educational backgrounds.

The IPA operates an open access policy and assesses applications from a range of non-traditional applicants: (i) mature students (over 21 years of age on year of entry); (ii) applicants who do not meet NUI matriculation requirements or who do not qualify as mature students; (iii) applicants seeking entry to the initial stage of a programme or advanced entry based on prior learning.

Access can be subdivided into two distinct categories: 1) *initial access*, ie. entry to the initial stage of a programme, and 2) *advanced access*, ie. access to a post-entry stage of a programme.

3.1 Initial Access

Entry into the initial stage of a programme is gained through: 1) meeting the NUI Minimum Academic Entry and Registration (Matriculation) Requirements specified in the IPA Admissions Policy; or 2) assessment of prior learning as specified in the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*.

3.1.1 Meeting the Eligibility Criteria

3.1.1.1 Entry requirements are specified for each programme and are appropriate to the programme type and level.

3.1.1.2 Entry requirements are published on the IPA website and application handbooks.

3.1.1.3 Entry arrangements are clear, decisions on allocation of places on programmes are transparent, and all applicants are treated in a fair, equal and consistent manner. Further information can be found in the IPA's *Admissions Policy & Criteria*.

3.1.2 Initial Access through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

3.1.2.1 The IPA has an *RPL Policy*, which allows initial entry to a programme through the recognition of prior formal/accredited and non-formal/informal/experiential learning.

3.1.2.2 Applicants who do not meet the standard entry criteria are required to complete the relevant application process outlined in the relevant sections of the Institute's *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*.

3.2 Module Credit/Advanced Access through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

3.2.1 The IPA provides for RPL as a legitimate means of having credit applied towards an IPA programme based on prior learning outcomes achieved by the applicant. Module credit or

advanced access to a post-entry stage of an IPA programme is based on the criteria and process laid out in the IPA's *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*, and summarised in the remainder of section 3.2 below.

- 3.2.2 Where the IPA is satisfied that a student has already achieved programme learning outcomes based on prior learning, the IPA may award general credit to recognise these learning outcomes rather than requesting that a student duplicate learning already achieved. These learning outcomes can be based on formal/accredited learning or informal/non-formal/experiential learning achieved outside the formal education system. Prospective applicants are directed to the IPA's *RPL Policy* and the relevant application forms.
- 3.2.3 Where credit is awarded based on learning outcomes already achieved, no grade may be associated with the credit used towards the IPA programme of study (general credit awarded).
- 3.2.4 Credits are granted, normally, on a module-by-module basis, but in relevant cases, these may be combined to exempt applicants from full stage requirements and to allow them advanced entry to a programme.
- 3.2.5 Credit is not used to establish eligibility for a full award. Credits are not awarded towards any part of the award year of a programme, or a programme whose duration is one year or less. In these cases, specific grades obtained by the student in the IPA programme of study (and not general credits awarded based on prior learning outcomes) are required for the calculation of an award result.
- 3.2.6 The maximum credit allowable based on prior achievement of learning outcomes is:
- 1-Year programme = no credits allowable
 - 2-Year programme = 50% of the IPA programme of study provided the first Year does not contribute to the final award (no credits allowable in final award year)
 - 4-Year programme = 75% of the IPA programme of study (no credits allowable in final award year).
- 3.2.7 Students will normally apply for module credits based on prior learning before they have enrolled on a programme. However, such applications are permissible from students after enrolment, or during a programme of study, if the applicant has recently achieved learning outcomes that may qualify them for exemptions from a module.

4 Transfer

- 4.1 Transfer is the process by which IPA students can transfer internally from one programme to another by being awarded general credit (no grades associated with the credit) to recognise

learning outcomes already achieved in the previous IPA programme. The remainder of Section 4 'Transfer', as set out below, outlines the conditions and protocols pertaining to internal transfer arrangements. Applicants 'transferring' to the IPA from another institution, and seeking module credits or advanced entry based on learning outcomes achieved, are treated as RPL applicants under 3.2 above and under section 3.3 of the IPA's *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*.

4.2 Internal transfer arrangements are subject to the following conditions:

1. There must be places available in the new programme.
2. Applicants seeking to transfer must meet the entry requirements for admission to the new programme (NUI Minimum Academic Entry and Registration (Matriculation) Requirements) OR meet the requirements for admission via an alternative entry pathway (e.g. Mature student entry or FETAC).

AND

- have passed a minimum of 50 ECTS (covering similar content), including sufficient modules and grades relevant to the new IPA programme they are seeking to enter.
3. Applicants who do not have sufficient credit or learning outcome achievements to transfer across to an equivalent stage or level of a cognate programme will enter at a lower level of the programme.
4. As no grade is associated with the credit used towards the IPA programme of study, credits are not awarded towards any part of the award year of a programme, or a programme whose duration is one year or less. In these cases, specific grades obtained by the student in the IPA programme of study are required for the calculation of an award result.
5. Applicants should apply for a programme transfer through the Registrar's Office.

5 Progression

5.1 Progression Arrangements

- 5.1.1 The IPA has a framework of integrated awards to enable its students to progress from programmes at certificate level to programmes at diploma, bachelor's degree and master's degree and doctoral level.
- 5.1.2 The framework has regard to the specialisation of the programme, the qualification, the award type and level on the NFQ, and the credit volume allocated to the programme.

- 5.1.3 Normally, students will be approved to undertake the next programme on the designated progression pathway once they have successfully completed a programme leading to an award. The IPA will establish where it deems appropriate, additional requirements as an integral component of a progression pathway (e.g. successful completion of a bridging programme, work experience or particular academic attainments (e.g. minimum grades).
- 5.1.4 Applications by IPA students to access further programmes outside established pathways are subject to the same published eligibility criteria or RPL policy applying to non-IPA graduates.
- 5.1.5 The IPA makes these progression arrangements (progression pathway and additional requirements) publicly available in programme prospectuses and on the website to assist learners in planning their professional education pathways.

5.2 Monitoring Student Performance

- 5.2.1 Module and programme co-ordinators, in conjunction with the Registrar's office and Head of Whitaker School, are responsible for monitoring the performance of students and for facilitating their progression opportunities. This involves:
- i. reviewing assignment and examination marks returned by lecturers
 - ii. reviewing the performance of students in the various modes of tuition (distance Education, lectures at the IPA, and lectures at regional centres)
 - iii. identifying unusual patterns and discrepancies, and taking action to remedy underlying causes as early as is practicable in conjunction with annual reviews feeding findings into course reviews and amendments.
- 5.2.2 The Registrar's office will supply co-ordinators with annual statistics relating to student performance: pass/failure/withdrawal rates, and the numbers of students in each award classification.
- 5.2.3 All registered continuing and repeat students are invited to seek advice or assistance from the Registrar's Office or relevant module or programme co-ordinators in relation to their studies.
- 5.2.4 The IPA has structured and embedded mechanisms to assist learners to progress their studies in the event of personal or professional or academic difficulties. Helpful assistance includes flexible tuition methods, phased approach to study, leave of absence from studies, study guidance. Students in difficulty are invited to contact the Registrar's Office. A learner's academic or personal difficulties will be treated in confidence and with sensitivity.

5.3 Flexible Learning Opportunities

The IPA's strategic objective is to enhance enrolment opportunities for professional learners in a way that supports the work-life balance. The Institute does this in a number of ways, including:

- A. Provision of learning that blends distance education, weekend and evening classes and e-learning supports.
- B. The opportunity for phased completion of an IPA programme of study by allocating credits to learning outcomes achieved for each module of the programme. There is a credit duration limit of 10 years, after which a student may be requested to re-take the module. Students are also expected to take the most up-to-date version of a programme available during the course of their studies.
- C. Special accommodations for learners facing work or family pressures, such as a leave of absence. A leave of absence from studies extends for one academic year but may be renewed annually depending on personal circumstances. Students returning from a leave of absence will be required to proceed with the most updated version of the programme. Students may also be required to complete modules newly introduced at a previous stage. Students returning from a leave of absence after a duration of greater than 10 years may be required to begin the programme from the beginning.
- D. Tailor-made programmes run in conjunction with government agencies for specific cohorts of individuals from the same department or sector who are new to third-level education.
- E. The IPA reserves the right to request an applicant to undertake a bridging studies programme or similar where it considers that such action will supplement the prior learning and enable admission or progression.

6 Information Provision

The following programme information will be known to students before enrolment:

- a. the name of the awarding body (or bodies) making the award for the programme to which they wish to apply
- b. the title of the programme and the award to which it leads
- c. the award level and type (a Major, Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- d. admission requirements, including a statement of the knowledge, skill and competence needed by the learner as a basis for successful participation on the programme

- e. admission arrangements and selection criteria
- f. fees and payment methods
- g. course structure, assessment methods, module summaries, tuition methods & locations, academic term dates and examination periods
- h. details of learning support available for specific learner groups such as learners with disabilities, or learners whose mother tongue is not English
- i. post-qualification progression routes
- j. requirements for progression
- k. a statement of arrangements available for recognition of prior learning.