



Academic Exemptions Policy and Procedure

January 2026

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Minor rewording and updating from the 2012 version. No change to the substance of the policy and procedure	D Killean	8/09/2014
1.2	Updated to include the use of the new Equality Impact Assessment tool in assessing this procedure	D Killean	31/05/2016
1.3	Inclusion of a paragraph recognising that Awarding Bodies will have their own definition of prior learning which may have wide definition. Responsibilities updated in line with job roles	J Robertson	September 2019
1.3.1	Minor wording changes	J Robertson	November 2019
1.4	Amendments to job role/titles. Removal of Director of Business development. Equality Impact assessment updated	Lynne Gilchrist	November 2022
	Amendments to reflect changes to single delivery model, job titles and duties, and SQA name change to Qualifications Scotland	J George	November 2025

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to define how students holding previously achieved qualifications can gain approval to use these as exemption from subsequent qualifications.

Whether this is feasible is largely down to the individual requirements of the awarding body. Some awarding bodies such as Qualifications Scotland (formerly SQA) have a wider definition of Recognition of Prior Learning, which may include the potential for recognition of non-formal learning or informal learning alongside formal learning (refer to [Qualifications Scotland or other awarding body's website](#)).

2.0 Scope

This policy and procedure can only be applied to students currently enrolled on an accredited college course.

3.0 Key Principles

- The College adheres to rigorous quality assurance procedures
- Students can appeal against decisions

4.0 Responsibilities

- 4.1 All delivery staff are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to
- 4.2 Delivery staff are responsible for informing the Delivery Team Manager (DTM) when a student wishes to use this policy
- 4.3 The Head of Sector (HoS) is responsible for writing a report containing the justification for exemption
- 4.4 The Vice Principal – Student Experience is responsible for making the decision on the request

5.0 Related Documents

- 5.1 Student Appeal Procedure
- 5.2 Awarding body documentation

6.0 Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Procedure

In circumstances where a member of staff is asked to approve the use of previously achieved units or qualifications for exemption purposes, or otherwise recognise prior learning, the following procedure will apply:

1. The member of delivery staff will raise the matter with the appropriate DTM.
2. Following this, the HoS should notify the Vice Principal – Student Experience, in writing, of the circumstances that apply in line with the awarding body requirements. This notification should clearly identify the grounds on which the HoS believes that exemption is appropriate. There may be a cost associated with this for the student or College. Where this does result in a cost to the student, in cases of genuine hardship, the student can apply to the hardship fund for funding support.
3. The Vice Principal – Student Experience will then assess the request, with reference to the appropriate awarding body, and identify any further information which is required. The HoS will be responsible for collecting and supplying any such information.
4. The Vice Principal – Student Experience will advise the HoS, in writing, of the decision on the exemption request.
5. The Principal or a designated deputy will chair any appeal panel on the decision regarding exemption, following the College's Appeals Procedure.

It is of the utmost importance that no student is granted exemption from any part of the qualification without prior written confirmation from the Vice Principal – Student Experience that such exemption has been granted.

The responsibility for requesting such exemption lies with the HoS responsible for the qualification in which the exemption is being requested.

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