(Author)

Academic Development and Standards Committee

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(Title of Item)

Academic Framework for Credit Accumulation in Postgraduate Degrees in UCC

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Academic Credibility

The postgraduate award of Masters in UCC consists of advanced courses and a dissertation to the value of at least 90 ECTS credits, with a Postgraduate Diploma consisting of advanced courses to the value of 60 credits and Postgraduate Certificate of 30 credits. In order to maintain the integrity and coherence of the curriculum as well as ensuring student progression it is proposed that all passed modules carry an exemption, which is limited to a fixed period. Following modularisation, Academic Council decided that this exemption should last 5 academic years (or 2 in the case of Computer Science modules) subsequent to the passing of the module. It is proposed that each programme that allows credit accumulation should determine the length of the exemption, to a maximum of 5 years. This limit specifies the maximum time available to achieve an award, i.e. 5 years after the first module has been passed.

Curriculum Change

In order to maintain currency and standards, many courses instigate curriculum change. However in the case of a programme that can be achieved through credit accumulation, where the curriculum is changed, any student on the programme with exemptions will retain those exemptions. Thus, a student will only be required to complete the number of credits outstanding for the award, even if the exempted modules are not part of the new curriculum for the programme.

Registration

Some see the use of CPD and postgraduate flexi-option modules as a possible entry route to postgraduate awards, with students who take these modules then opting to complete an award. In order to maximise the return to UCC through the HEA block grant returns it is proposed that a student must register for an award after completing 15 credits, if they satisfy the entry requirements for the award.

In the case of a student who has chosen to take an exit award it should be noted that the 5 year exemption for module also applies in the case where modules from that exit award are used for exemptions in a higher award. The Student Information System, is not currently configured to provide the flexibility required for a credit accumulation award and each student will need to apply for exemptions on readmission for a higher award.

<u>Accumulating Awards</u>

In a credit accumulation system, there will probably be an uptake in students choosing to benefit from modules completed by taking a staged award. A full time student who completes a 90 credit Taught Masters leaves UCC with a single award, in a credit accumulation setting a student could potentially leave with 3 awards (Certificate, Diploma and Masters) for the same 90 credits. Thus it is proposed that

1. Staged awards should have the same title as the major award, for example:
    a. Postgraduate Certificate in Electrical & Electronic Engineering
    b. Postgraduate Diploma in Electrical & Electronic Engineering
    c. MEngSc in Electrical & Electronic Engineering
2. Staged awards in the same subject are subsumed into a higher award, once that is completed. UCC will investigate if the NUI will allow for policy of subsuming awards into higher degrees without the need of physically returning the original award. This subsuming would be implemented through adjustment to the student transcript.

The staged awards are Minor Awards under the NFQ and provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes, but not the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award.