



Guidelines and Procedures for Return to Studies

Section 1 Introduction, Definitions, Scope and Purpose

1.1 Introduction

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter) is committed to ensuring that pre-defined and published regulations are consistently applied covering all phases of the learner 'life cycle' (e.g. learner admission, progression, recognition and certification).¹ Moreover, the approved quality assurance policies and procedures related to *Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy* conform to the *Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training*.²

The purpose of this document is to set out the College's quality assurance framework in relation to the processing of requests from learners who, having been previously granted an internal College deferral from their programme of studies or who having taken extended leave from their studies, wish to return to their studies. Specifically, these guidelines and procedures, which are part of the *Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy*, relates to deferred learners and formerly registered learners who have completed some element(s) or stage(s) of the programme of studies for which they have been registered. These guidelines and procedures do not relate to prospective learners who, having been offered a place on a programme of studies by the College, wish to defer their commencement of such studies to a different academic year (for these procedures, click [here](#)).

As the College (i) currently offers a deferral option to its registered learners and (ii) has a number of formerly registered learners documented as deferred and (iii) has past learners who have not completed their programme of study and (iv) currently has no policy to govern the decision-making and procedures in relation to requests to return to study from such learners, this document now seeks to formalise this process.

¹ *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (Yerevan: Ministerial Conference, May 2015), p. 10.

² *Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training* (Dublin: QQI, April 2016), pp. 32-3.

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

1.2 Definitions

Deferred Learner: a deferred learner is one who, having completed some element or stage of the programme of studies for which they are registered, has been granted an internal College deferral for a period of one year. At the end of this period, learners granted such a deferral may make a new application for a further deferral of one academic year.³ No further application for deferral will be considered by the College after this second year. Learners who do not resume their programme of studies in the academic year immediate following the end of the granted deferral period are deemed to be Formerly Registered Learners.

Formerly Registered Learner⁴: a formerly registered learner is one who (i) formally or informally withdraws from their programme of studies, or, (ii) does not return to study following the completion of the deferral period grant to them, or, (iii) has not applied for and been granted internal College deferral and does not return to study at the commencement of the next academic year.

1.3 Scope of these Guidelines and Procedures

This guidelines and procedures apply to (i) all deferred learners of the College and to (ii) all formerly registered learners of the College who have not completed a programme of studies at the College leading to an award. They do not apply to graduates of the College who wish to apply to enrol *ab initio* in another programme of study offer by the College.

Moreover, they do not apply to (i) graduates of the College, or, (ii) learners with credits from the College, or, (iii) learners with credits from another Higher or Further Education Institution, who wish to apply for Advanced Entry to a programme of study at the College. Such applications are subject to the relevant sections of the College's [Admission Guidelines and Procedures for Internal / External Transfers and Advanced Entry](#).

1.4 Purpose Statement

The principles and goals underlying these guidelines and procedures are:

- to facilitate continued access to third level education by former learners of the College;
- to provide clarity, transparency, accountability, efficacy and equity in relation to returning learner admission at Carlow College;

³ [Guidelines and Procedures for Deferred Entry or Deferred Continuation of Studies](#).

⁴ Who have not completed a programme of studies leading to an Award.

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

- to ensure that returning learners are at an appropriate stage in their learning development to be re-admitted to their specified programmes of education;
- to have appropriate recognition of periods of study and credits achieved; and
- to ensure that returning learners are assisted and supported in their return to third level education.

1.5 Procedures

The considerations, processes and procedures for dealing with return to study applications from formerly registered learners is set out in Section 2 below.

The considerations, processes and procedures for dealing with return to study applications from deferred learners is set out in Section 3 below.

1.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The admissions function and process of the College is held by the Office of the Registrar and is conducted through the Admissions Office. This include policies and procedures in relation to the applications for re-admittance by deferred learners and by formerly registered learners. The Admissions Office holds responsibility for ensuring the timely and effective processing of applications for return to study by deferred learners and by formerly registered learners.

Section 2 Re-admission Considerations, Guidelines and Procedures for Return to Studies applications by Deferred Learners

2.1 Considerations

To be granted deferred learner status, a learner will have completed the College an application for deferral process. This includes completion of an application form detailing reasons for requesting the deferral and a requirement to discuss the matter with the appropriate Programme Director. The Programme Director advises the Office of the Registrar and the Admissions Officer in relation to the deferral application. Applicants are encouraged also to discuss their decision with other College student support personnel. Accordingly, applications for deferred learner status will have engaged with the College in relation to their learning journey. Further, as noted above, deferred learner status is only granted for a maximum total period of two academic years.

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

2.2 Guidelines

When a deferred seeks re-admittance to their programme of studies, two issues must be addressed by the College, namely;

1. Can the learner return to the relevant programme of studies at the point at which they deferred? For example, (i) is the learner required to complete take modules or assessments which they did not complete prior to deferral or (ii) has the curriculum of the programme of studies changed in a manner which impacts the learner's module choices when they resume their studies.
2. Has the issue which prompted the learner's deferral decision been resolved sufficiently to enable the learner to resume their learning journey.

2.3 Procedures

The applicant completes the *Return to Studies Deferred Learner Application Form* and provides it to the Admissions Office.

The Admissions Office provides the relevant Programme Director with copies of the following documents:

- the applicant's original completed *Application for Deferral Form*;
- the applicant's completed *Return to Studies Deferred Learner Application Form*;
- the applicant's results transcript;
- the *Return to Studies Deferred Learner Academic Report Form*;

The Programme Director, or their nominee, arranges an interview with the applicant in order to address the academic matters outline under guideline number one (above).

If the applicant has identified an academic related issue(s) in their original *Application for Deferral Form*, then the Programme Director, or their nominee, must also address this in the interview.

It is not appropriate for the Programme Director, or their nominee, to inquire into any other matters identified by the applicant in their original application for deferral, although the applicant may choose to raise other matters at interview.

Following the interview, the Programme Director, or their nominee, completes the *Return to Studies Deferred Learner Academic Report Form* on behalf of the applicant and provides it to the Admissions Office.

The Admissions Office provides the applicants file to the Office of the Registrar. Where the applicant has identified a reason other than academic in their original *Application for Deferral*

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

Form, then the Office of the Registrar must satisfy itself that the said reason is no longer a hindrance to the applicant resuming their studies. The Office of the Registrar signs off on the College's decision in relation to the application and communicates directly with the applicant. The Office of the Registrar returns the applicant's file to the Admission Office, including verification of the decision arrived at.

2.4 Timing

The deadline for receipt by the Admissions Office of *Applications for Return to Study by Deferred Learners* is 2nd August immediately prior to the commencement of the Academic Year for which they are seeking re-registration.

Section 3 Re-admission Considerations, Guidelines and Procedures for Return to Studies Applications by Formerly Registered Learners

3.1 Considerations

Individuals who were formerly registered with the College but did not complete their programme of study may seek to return to the same programme. Some of these individuals may not have engaged meaningfully with the College Admissions Office in relation to their decision to leave their programme of studies. Some of these individuals may be applying for return to studies after a considerable period of time has elapsed.

3.2 Guidelines

For the College, the key issues relate to:

1. is the relevant programme of study still being delivered by the College;
2. are the curriculum credits previously gained by the applicants still current and / or relevant to the specific programme of study;
3. has a period of time elapsed which raises a question over the appropriateness of the applicant re-joining the programme at some mid-point of the programme's learning cycle; and
4. has the issue which prompted the applicant's withdrawal from studies been resolved or changed sufficiently to enable the learner to resume their learning journey. While it may not be within the College's competence to determine this issue, the application process should provide an indication as to whether the College needs to seek assurances in relation to this matter.

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

3.3 Procedures

The applicant completes the *Return to Studies Formerly Registered Learner Application Form* and provides it to the Admissions Office.

The Admissions Office provides the relevant Programme Director with copies of the following documents:

- the applicant's completed *Return to Studies Formerly Registered Learner Form*,
- the applicant's results transcript; and
- the *Return to Studies Formerly Registered Learner Academic Report Form*.

The Programme Director, or their nominee, arranges an interview with the applicant in order to address the academic matters outline under the above detailed guidelines (3.2).

If the applicant has identified an academic related issue or issues in their original *Application for Deferral Form* then the Programme Director, or their nominee, then this matter must be address in the interview also.

It is not appropriate for the Programme Director, or their nominee, to inquire into any other matters identified by the applicant in their application for return to studies, although the applicant may choose to raise any other matters at interview.

Following the interview, the Programme Director, or their nominee, completes the *Return to Studies Formerly Registered Learner Academic Report Form* on behalf of the applicant and provides it to the Admissions Office.

The Admissions Office provides the applicants file to the Office of the Registrar. The Office of the Registrar signs off on the College's decision in relation to the application and communicates directly with the applicant. The Office of the Registrar return's the applicant's file to the Admission Office, including verification of the decision arrived at.

3.4 Timing

The deadline for receipt by the Admissions Office of *Applications for Return to Study by Formerly Registered Learners* is the 2 August immediately prior to the commencement of the Academic Year for which they are seeking re-registration.

Appendix 16.1: Return to Studies Deferred Learner Application Form



Return to Studies Deferred Learner Application Form

Name of Applicant

Address

E-mail

Mobile

Previous Student Registration Number

College Degree Programme

Initial date of deferral

Stage or Stages completed

Reason for Returning to Studies at this time

Signature

Date

Appendix 16.2 Return to Studies Deferred Learner Academic Report Form



Return to Studies Deferred Learner Academic Report Form

Name of Applicant

Address

E-mail

Mobile

Previous Student Registration Number

College Degree Programme

Initial date of deferral

Stage or Stages completed

Reason for returning to Studies at this time

Academic issues faced by the student which require or may require special support

Changes to the programme structure or curriculum which need to be taken into account.

Academic recommendation by the Programme Director.

Signature

Date

Policy: *Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy*

Owner: Office of the Registrar

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

Appendix 16. 3 Return to Studies Formerly Registered Learner Application Form



Return to Studies Formerly Registered Learner Application Form

Name of Applicant

Address

E-mail

Mobile

Previous Student Registration Number

College Degree Programme

Year of last registration with the College

Stage or Stages completed

Reason for returning to Studies at this time

Signature

Date

Policy: *Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy*

Owner: Office of the Registrar

Date Approved: 24 June 2025

Appendix 16.4 Formerly Registered Learner Academic Report Form



COLÁISTE CHEATHARLACH
NAOMH PÁDRAIG
CARLOW COLLEGE
ST. PATRICK'S

Return to Studies: Formerly Registered Learner Academic Report Form

Name of Applicant

Address

E-mail

Mobile

Previous Student Registration Number

College Degree Programme

Stage or Stages completed

Reason for returning to Studies at this time

Academic issues faced by the student which require or may require special support

Changes to the programme structure or curriculum which need to be taken into account.

Academic recommendation by the Programme Director.

Signature

Date