Access, Transfer and Progression Policy

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1. Purpose

Section 84(15) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 requires higher education providers to establish procedures for access, transfer and progression of learners in accordance with the procedures established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) under section 8(2)(d) of the Act of 1999. Thus, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) requires that education providers must ensure that:

- 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,
- appropriate arrangements are made for an appeals process,
- for every programme, prospective learners have available statements of the knowledge, skill and competence needed as a basis for successful participation, and there is comparability in the factors defined for similar programmes, and
- for each programme, there is clear definition of the awards in the framework that are recognised as demonstrating eligibility for entry and, where relevant, the attainments required in these awards.

(QQI, 2015, p. 7)

In accordance with these requirements, in establishing its policy and procedures for access, admission, transfer and progression, ATU commits to:

- treating all applicants in an equitable and fair way,
- adhering to published policies and procedures,
- managing and retaining records in line with its *Admissions Data Retention Policy*, and
- responding to applicants' queries in a timely manner.

Equity of access to higher education is a fundamental principle of Irish education policy. The fourth *National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028* (HEA, 2022) sets out two key objectives as follows:

- that the higher education student body, at all levels and across all programmes, reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population, and
- that our higher education institutions are inclusive, universally designed environments which support student success and outcomes, equity and diversity.

Central to the realisation of ATU's vision to 'become an international renowned university that enhances the quality of life in our region and creates a sustainable future for all', ATU has a strong track record in the development and provision of a broad range of entry routes and online flexible learning pathways which are student-centred, and which facilitate easy access to programmes of study at all levels. This is reflected in ATU's Strategic Plan 2024-2028 '*Open Minds, Bright Futures*', which pledges a strong commitment to equity of access and to lifelong learning and commits to providing opportunities and supports for diverse

individuals to access, participate in and successfully complete higher education programmes.

To demonstrate our responsibility to Goal 4 of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (UN, 2015) which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', ATU commits to providing opportunities for lifelong and life-wide learning through provision of a broad range of online, flexible and professional development programmes and micro-credentials for new entrants to higher education as well as those returning to or continuing their education.

ATU values internationalisation of education, which it views as a comprehensive approach to education that prepares students and staff to be active and engaged participants in an interconnected global world. Recognising the synergies between internationalisation and equality, diversity and inclusion, in embracing cultural diversity, we will enhance ATU's global perspectives and enrich the learning experience for all our students.

2. Scope

This policy applies to applicants for all programmes (major, minor), special purpose awards, supplemental awards and micro-credentials offered by ATU, registered students of ATU and ATU staff involved in the admission, transfer and progression of students enrolled on ATU programmes of study. This includes individuals who are:

- School leavers with an Irish Leaving Certificate,
- School leavers with UK, EU or EFTA qualifications,
- Further Education and Training (QQI-FET) award-holders,
- Mature new entrants,
- Access programme graduates,
- Applying from outside the EU (International applicants).

It also applies to current and previously registered students of ATU, as well as others who wish to avail themselves of progression and transfer routes into and onwards from all ATU programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), for the purposes of personal and professional development. The policy applies to all modes and formats of delivery: full-time, part-time, on-campus, asynchronous online, synchronous online, and blended.

While facilitating access to higher education for a diverse body of learners is enshrined in this policy, and while the entry routes/pathways which ATU provides for access to higher education are outlined here, the academic, social and financial supports required to enable all students - and especially those who come from groups which have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education - to commence, enjoy fully, progress and complete

their programmes are beyond the scope of this policy. The University's commitment to removing barriers for underrepresented students and providing the required services to support these students to reach their full academic potential is articulated in our *AQAE023 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy*, and detailed further in related policies/strategies.

3. External Reference Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 – 2016
- QQI Policy Restatement Policy and Criteria for Access Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training (QQI, 2015)
- Council Recommendation on Promoting Automatic Mutual Recognition of Higher Education and Upper Secondary Education Diplomas and the Outcomes of Learning Periods Abroad (EC, 2018)
- National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028 (HEA, 2022)
- From Counting to Cultivating Successful Participation: A Review of the Landscape of Practice Supporting Access Transfer and Progression in Irish Education and Training (QQI, 2023)
- Entry Requirements Criteria for EU/EFTA/UK Applicants (other than Irish Leaving Certificate) for 2024 entry (THEA, IUI and RCSI, 2023)

4. Policy

The general principles informing access, admission, transfer, and progression at ATU are as follows:

- Clear and accurate information on entry requirements, application procedures, admissions processes and transfer and progression routes for all programmes and micro-credentials (where applicable) will be published on ATUs website and in programme prospectuses.
- All programmes and micro-credentials offered by ATU will clearly indicate their level on the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ), the ECTS attached, and state the NFQ award and performance level in the award required for entry.
- All applicants to ATU will be treated in a fair, equal and consistent manner. Decisions on the allocation of places on programmes and micro-credentials will be

transparent, and applicants will have the right to appeal any decision made (except for decisions made by the Central Applications Office (CAO)).

- ATU is committed to providing equity of access regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race (which includes colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins), membership of the Traveller community, or the socio-economic background of an applicant.

- In addition to standard entry-routes, ATU is committed to providing supplementary entry-routes to facilitate student access, transfer, and progression onto its programmes for those groups/communities who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, including, but not limited to, those who are identified as priority groups in the *National Access Plan.*

- ATU is committed to embedding universal design (UD) and inclusive practice in all functions across the University and will provide appropriate, integrated support and services, through a UD lens, to enable all students to participate fully in their studies at ATU and to reach their full academic potential.

- ATU will recruit international students in a transparent and ethical manner. ATU will ensure that information provided to potential international students about the University and its provision is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date.

- A statement of arrangements available for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for entry to each of ATU's programmes, and for access to an award will be published in programme prospectuses, webpages and other promotional materials.

- ATU will endeavour to inform applicants to programmes/micro-credentials which involve direct application to the University (non-CAO applications) at least three weeks prior to its commencement/or in accordance with the details published on the programme webpage whether they have been accepted onto the programme/micro-credential. In instances where commencement is contingent on minimum numbers, ATU will endeavour to inform applicants well in advance of the proposed commencement date whether the programme will commence.

- All programmes/micro-credentials seeking derogation from standard entry requirements set out in this policy must apply to the Academic Council for approval.

In general, a student's achievement at a specific level on the NFQ prepares the student for undertaking a cognate programme of study at the next level. The entry requirements for admission to programmes of study at ATU are also governed by several factors, including:

1. A basic premise of minimum entry requirements is that applicants for programmes must '*have available statements of the knowledge, skill and competence needed as a basis for successful participation*.'
2. There is comparability in the factors defined for similar programmes at a given level on the NFQ offered by HEIs at a given level.

3. There may be multiple access routes onto programmes at a given level on the NFQ. However, using a supplementary entry-route to enter a programme of study which leads to a major award at ATU must not confer an advantage on a student which enables them to achieve the award in a shorter time than that which would be the norm for students entering by a direct entry-route.

4. While the selection and admission of students is usually a competitive process as HEIs seek to ensure that students achieve the highest award performance levels on their programmes of study, ATU is fully committed to countering educational disadvantage/challenges through providing flexible pathways to ensure equity of access for students from underrepresented groups and to supporting all students to reach their full academic potential.

4.1 Definitions and Abbreviations

Ab-Initio: An ab-initio programme is a Bachelor degree (Level 7) and Honours Bachelor degree (Level 8) that embeds the ladder of progression, typically 'from the beginning' (ab-initio).

Access: Access, in the context of higher education (HE) is understood to encompass not only entry, but also retention and successful completion.

Admission: Refers to the formal process by which students are admitted to a programme leading to an award, following verification that they have met the minimum entry standards and any other special entry requirements.

Central Applications Office (CAO): The Central Applications Office (CAO) processes applications for fulltime undergraduate courses in Irish higher education institutions (HEIs). Decisions on admissions to undergraduate programmes are made by the HEIs, who then instruct the CAO to make offers to successful candidates.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA): is the intergovernmental organisation of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. While these countries are not part of the European Union (EU), they participate in the European Single Market and students from EFTA countries are treated as EU students for the purposes of fees.

Entry: Entry is understood as being entry on initial access or by transfer or progression to a programme of study.

Entry requirements: The minimum student performance in a specified award or combination of awards required to be eligible for admission to a programme of study. For some programmes, additional academic evidence and/or previous experiences may also be specified as requirements.

Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP): Higher Education providers who wish to provide third level or English language programmes to non-EEA/non-Swiss nationals must apply for inclusion on the ILEP, which is maintained by the Department of Justice primarily for immigration service delivery. Providers are required to meet specified criteria for each type of approved programme to be included on the ILEP.

Lifelong learning: Lifelong learning encompasses all purposeful learning activity, whether formal, non-formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence.

National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ): The single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way, and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards.

Programme: ATU provides programmes of study, the successful completion of which leads to a university award of a qualification type on a NFQ Level. Programmes are comprised of module(s) of study, which are organised into pathways for completion over the duration of the programme.

Progression: The process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme at the next level on the NFQ. Stage progression is the progression by a registered student from a specific stage on a programme to the next stage of the programme.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI): QQI is the State agency that maintains the NFQ and provides quality assurance for Further and Higher Education (HE) in Ireland.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): RPL incorporates prior formal, informal and non-formal learning and that which is validated within the context of a specified destination award from level one to ten on the national framework of qualifications.

Registration: The formal registration of students is necessary before students can begin their studies on a programme. ATU Registration, Fees and Grants Office is responsible for the registration process.

Transfer: The process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill and competence acquired.

Mature student: A mature student is a person who is 23 years of age or older on 1st January of the year of application for entry into a higher education programme.

4.2   General entry requirements

4.2.1   Minimum Age for Entry

For Irish/EU/EFTA/UK students, the minimum age for entry to a programme of study at ATU is 17 years on September 1st of the year of entry. For International students, the minimum age for entry is 18 years of age at the time of registration. Candidates of 17 years of age may be considered for admission, provided the requisite guardianship arrangements are in place, prior to registration.

4.2.2   Minimum and Additional Entry Requirements

The Academic Council establishes the minimum entry requirements for all ATU programmes of study. Additional entry requirements for programmes may be proposed by a validation/programmatic review panel or the relevant Programme Board and approved by Academic Council. The Programme or Micro-credential Specification document will outline all criteria that must be met by prospective students to be admitted to a programme.

An official *Repository of Specific Entry Requirements* (ROSER) for all ATU programmes of study will be maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs (Admissions Office) and available on the Admissions webpage. Any additional entry requirements will be clearly outlined in individual programme prospectuses and on the programme webpage.

4.2.3   English Language Requirements

Teaching in ATU is normally through the medium of English; therefore, all applicants are required to demonstrate a high level of competence in English Language. Applicants presenting with the Irish Leaving Certificate or A-level are expected to meet English language requirements through those examinations.

Applicants presenting other examinations must normally provide an English result as part of that examination.

International applicants from EU/EFTA countries applying for undergraduate programmes are required to meet minimum English language requirements in order to study at ATU, in accordance with those outlined in the latest edition of *Entry Requirements Criteria for EU/EFTA/UK Applicants (other than Irish Leaving Certificate)* (https://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/2024/Guidelines-EU-EFTA-UK-2024.pdf).

International applicants from outside of the EU are required to show equivalent competency in English either through their final upper-secondary school recognised leaving examination or by achieving the minimum standard in a recognised English language test, as outlined in the following tables:

Minimum English Language Requirements for International Applicants for Undergraduate Entry:

Test	Minimum Score	Notes
IELTS	5.5	No component less than 5.0
PTE Academic	59	
TOEFL IBT	70	
TOEFL CBT	196	
TOEFL PBT	550	
Duolingo English Test (DET)	95	No component less than 90
TOEIC	605	
Trinity College London	Trinity GESE 8 or ISE II	
Cambridge Exams	FCE High Grade C	
Cambridge Cert (Advanced)	Grade C	
ETAPP	B2+	
Oxford Test of English	111	No component less than 100
O-Level English (SPM 1119)	C	
WAEC English	C	

Minimum English Language Requirements for International Applicants for Postgraduate Entry:

Test	Minimum Score	Notes
IELTS	6.0	No component less than 5.5
PTE Academic	76	
TOEFL IBT	80	
TOEFL CBT	213	
TOEFL PBT	575	
Duolingo English Test (DET)	105	No component less than 100
TOEIC	660	
Trinity College London	Trinity GESE 9 or ISE II	
Cambridge Exams	FCE High Grade B	
Cambridge Cert (Advanced)	Grade B	
ETAPP	C1	
Oxford Test of English	125	No component less than 100

Applicants who have completed a degree or postgraduate programme through the medium of English are deemed to meet the language entry requirements for ATU programmes, irrespective of level.

4.2.4   Student Vetting (Garda Vetting)

ATU is obligated in terms of the *National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016* to require that all students (including prospective students) who may potentially engage in relevant work or activities relating to those defined by the Vetting Act to undergo vetting.

Offers of placements on ATU programmes for which vetting is required, or continuance of registration will be provisional and contingent on the applicant's satisfactory completion of vetting. Depending upon the outcome of the vetting process, the University reserves the right: to not register a student; to remove an existing registered student; or to delay the student's practice placement.

All programmes/micro-credentials for which student vetting is a requirement for entry/participation in a practice placement will be clearly identified in promotional material under the heading 'Garda Vetting'.

4.2.5   Registration

An applicant is not considered to be a student solely on the basis of an *offer* of a place in ATU and/or acceptance of such an offer. All offers are subject to the regulations of the University. Following acceptance of an offer from ATU, applicants will be required to complete the registration process in order to formally become a student of ATU.

The registration process requires the applicant to fully complete and submit the online registration form, together with payment of fees (where applicable) and student registration fee (where applicable). Details of registration dates for each cohort of students will be posted on the ATU Registration, Fees and Grants Office webpage.

It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to ensure their registration is complete/up to date. An unregistered applicant is not entitled to avail of any of ATU's facilities and may not sit examinations.

Only fully registered students may attend class, access online learning resources and enter the assessment and examination processes.

4.2.6   Decision to Admit

Irrespective of the access, transfer or progression routes, the decision to admit an applicant for a programme of study is made by the VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar, a decision which he/she may delegate to the Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) or another Manager. Where academic judgement is required on an application, the Admissions Office will seek advice from the relevant Head of Department/Programme Chair.

4.2.7 Discretion to Refuse Admission

ATU, in its absolute discretion, may refuse admission to an applicant where it believes that the applicant:

- has previously been excluded from ATU or its legacy institutions for any reason,
- is currently indebted to ATU,
- has engaged in dishonest and/or deceitful behaviour in the process of applying for admission to ATU or any other Higher Education Institution (HEI),

- has been excluded or had their enrolment cancelled at another HEI,
- is deemed a non-genuine temporary entrant,
- may prejudice the reputation, management, governance, safety or discipline of ATU,
- would not be able to lawfully enter University premises for all or part of the duration of a programme by reason of a court order.

ATU reserves the right to rescind an offer of admission if it found at any stage during the admissions process, including after registration, that the applicant has presented falsified documents.

4.3   Standard Entry to Year 1 Undergraduate Programmes

4.3.1   Irish Leaving Certificate Applicants

Applicants who are applying based on Irish Leaving Certificate Established (LC) results are assessed on a points system, provided eligibility requirements are met. An applicant's examination score will be calculated by adding together the points scored in:

- the best *five* subjects in a single sitting of the Irish LC Examination for level 6/7 programmes, or
- the best *six* subjects in a single sitting of the Irish LC Examination for level 8 programmes

Bonus points (25 points) are awarded for Higher Level Mathematics for H6 grades and above. Bonus points are only counted where that subject is scored as one of the applicant's best five/six subjects for points purposes.

Applications are then assessed in accordance with CAO procedures (see CAO handbook https://www.cao.ie/handbook.php for full details).

After the points have been calculated, applicants are placed on a list in order of merit for each course for which they are eligible by the CAO.

Offers of places to LC applicants are made by the CAO, following instruction by the ATU Admissions Office with regard to the number of offers to be made for each programme.

4.3.1.1 Entry requirements for applicants to ATU Higher Certificate (Level 6) and to Ordinary Degree (Level 7) programmes

Applicants must achieve a pass in the Leaving Certificate, and meet minimum entry criteria as follows:

- 5 Leaving Certificate subjects at grade O6/H7 or better.
- Subjects must include either English or Irish.

- Mathematics is a required subject in most cases. However, there are a few programmes for which Mathematics in not an entry requirement and some programmes where a higher grade in maths is required. Foundation Level Mathematics is accepted for the purposes of entry requirements in the case of any programme where Higher or Ordinary Level Mathematics is not a requirement. Specific details regarding programme-specific mathematics requirements will be outlined in ROSER.
- A minimum score of 160 points is required for all Level 6/7 programmes.

Those programmes which have additional entry requirements for Stage 1 entry will be listed on ROSER, together with a list of the specific requirements.

4.3.1.2 Entry requirements for applicants to ATU Honours Degree (Level 8) programmes

Applicants must achieve a pass in the Leaving Certificate, and meet minimum entry criteria as follows:

- 6 Leaving Certificate subjects.
- A minimum of two subjects at grade H5 or better.
- Remaining subjects at O6/H7 or better.
- Subjects must include either English or Irish.
- Mathematics is a required subject in most cases. However, there are a few programmes for which Mathematics in not an entry requirement and some programmes where a higher grade in mathematics is required. Foundation Level Mathematics is accepted for the purposes of entry requirements in the case of any programme where Higher or Ordinary Level Mathematics is not a requirement. Specific details regarding programme-specific mathematics requirements will be outlined in ROSER.

Those programmes which have additional entry requirements for Stage 1 entry will be listed on ROSER, together with a list of the specific requirements.

4.3.1.3 Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

As well as the Leaving Certificate Established (LC) programme, ATU recognises the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) for admission purposes.

The Link Modules can be used as one of the six subjects for overall points calculation and may also be considered as a subject for the purposes of minimum entry requirements, depending on the programme requirements. The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme is not accepted by ATU for admission to CAO-entry programmes.

4.3.2   Further Education and Training (QQI FET) Applicants

4.3.2.1 QQI FET level 5/6 Award Holders

Students who successfully complete *any* full QQI FET level 5/6 award are eligible to apply for admission to stage 1 of undergraduate programmes, apart from some programmes which qualify graduates for entry into a regulated profession. These programmes may not have a QQI FET entry route or may require applicants to have completed a specific QQI FET award, or one of a list of specific awards. Where such is the case, this information will be outlined in ROSER and indicated on the programme prospectus and webpage.

For QQI FET applicants, a component certificate will not suffice, the applicant must hold a full major award. Normally, a major award (encompassing eight modules) may be accumulated over more than one academic year, but there are some programmes which require the award to be taken in one year only. Where such is the case, this information will be indicated on ROSER and on the programme prospectus and webpage. In instances where constituent modules of a QQI FET major award are taken over more than one year, it is the responsibility of the applicant to apply to QQI for the major award, in advance of/concurrent to applying to the CAO.

Applications are made through the CAO. For applicants applying for a level 8 programme, normally, applicants must have achieved a minimum of 3 distinctions in their QQI/FET award. Where entry to a programme requires a greater number of distinctions, or where specific subjects/grades are required for entry, this will be specified in ROSER and the programme prospectus.

All ATU programmes have a QQI quota of places reserved for QQI applicants (specified in ROSER), thus applications to QQI quota programmes will be considered in CAO Round Zero.

At ATU, for all undergraduate programmes which have a QQI FET entry-route, a minimum of 5% of places will be reserved for applicants applying on the basis of a QQI/FET award.

4.3.2.2 Tertiary Degree Route

ATU offers Tertiary Degrees which provide seamless transitioning pathways from Further Education to Higher Education, with year one of the degree delivered in Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges (except for Nursing), and subsequent years delivered on ATU campuses.

Tertiary Degree programmes at ATU are co-designed and are co-delivered with Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

The minimum entry requirements for all Tertiary Degree Programmes (except for Nursing) are as follows:

- Leaving Certificate – Grade O6/H7 or better in five Leaving Certificate subjects. Leaving Certificate must include English or Irish and Mathematics. Maths at F2 is acceptable to meet the minimum Maths entry requirement. Irish at F2 is acceptable

to meet the minimum language requirements. (UK and International equivalents will be considered), *or*

- A full level 5/6 QQI award, *or*

- Mature applicants – (aged 23 on or before 1st January of the course commencement year). These applicants do not have to meet the minimum entry requirements listed here and are considered on an individual basis (previous education, work experience, and demonstration of competence to undertake the programme), *or*

- Completion of an ATU Access Programme or another recognised Access programme, *or*

- An applicant who is a minimum of 17 years of age with at least 2 years post Junior Certificate relevant experience. All applicants must demonstrate that they would qualify for the special rate of maintenance grant under the Student Grant Scheme (SUSI) and/or are in receipt of a Department of Social Protection (DSP) long-term means-tested social welfare payment and/or be from one or more of the priority groups or from any priority group identified as part of the *National Access Plan (2022-2028)*.

Applicants must demonstrate competence to undertake the programme.

Applications for Tertiary Degree Programmes are made online via the *Further Education & Training Course Hub (FETCH)* https://www.fetchcourses.ie/.

For the first year of their programme, applicants who are offered a place on a Tertiary Degree Programme are required to dual register with ATU and with the FET College in which their programme is delivered in year 1.

4.3.3 United Kingdom (UK)/European Union (EU)/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Applicants

For stage 1 undergraduate programmes at levels 6, 7 and 8, all applicants with EU/EFTA/UK fee-status must apply through the Central Applications System (CAO).

Applicants seeking entry to stage 1 of undergraduate programmes are required to hold school-leaving awards that are approximately equivalent to the Irish Leaving Certificate or NFQ Level 5 awards. Acceptable exams are normally State/National exams taken at the end of the upper cycle at second level.

4.3.3.1 UK/NI Applicants

For entry to Level 6/7 Programmes, five different GSSE/GCE subjects are required, which meet the following criteria:

- Must include either English or Irish at GCSE grade C or better,
- Include at least one GCE A-Level at grade E or better,
- Other four subjects may be drawn from GCSE (Grades A-C only) or AS grades A-E,
- Maths is required for most programmes, and a minimum GCSE grade C is required. Some programmes may require a higher grade, in which case, this will be specified in the programme prospectus.

For entry to Level 8 Programmes, six different GSSE/GCE subjects are required, which meet the following criteria:

- Must include either English or Irish at GCSE grade C or better,
- Include 2 subjects at GCE A - Level grade C or better,
- Other four 4 subjects at GCSE Level Grade C

For the calculation of points for UK/NI applicants, ATU will employ the points conversion recommended in *Leaving Certificate – A Level Equivalencies Working Group Report* (Universities Ireland, 2023).

ATU will also consider awards at UK Framework Level 3 or higher, BTECs, AVCs, GNVQs, etc.

4.3.3.2 EU/EFTA Applicants

Applicants presenting EU/EFTA school leaving qualifications for entry onto ATU programmes are assessed for minimum entry and additional requirements using the information and the equivalent Leaving Certificate points tables provided in the current agreed guidance document published jointly by the Technological Higher Education Association, Irish Universities Alliance and Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (THEA, IUI and RCSI, 2023).

Final admissions decision for EU/EFTA applicants are the responsibility of the VPAAR, who has the authority to adjudicate and decide on whether to admit the applicant. Authority may be delegated to the Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) or another appropriate manager.

4.3.4   Non-EU Applicants

International applicants from outside EU/EFTA must be at least 18 years of age at the time of registration on an ATU academic programme. Candidates of 17 years of age may be considered for admission, provided the requisite guardianship arrangements are in place, prior to registration. If an applicant is made an offer and will be 17 years of age when our programme commences, then they must satisfy the Department of Justice requirements for Non-EU minors in Ireland (https://www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-study-in-ireland/policy-on-non-eea-nationals/)

Non-EU applicants to undergraduate programmes apply directly to ATU Global using an online form. Applicants seeking entry to stage 1 of undergraduate programmes are required to hold school-leaving awards that are approximately equivalent to the Irish Leaving Certificate or NFQ Level 5 awards. Acceptable exams are normally State/National exams taken at the end of the upper cycle at second level.

Applicants are required to provide evidence of competency in the English language and to meet the minimum requirements outlined in section 4.2.3.

Final admissions decisions for international applicants are the responsibility of the VPAAR, who has the authority to adjudicate and decide on whether to admit the applicant. Authority may be delegated to the Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) or another appropriate manager.

4.3.5   Students taking Undergraduate Programmes on a Part-time Basis

Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Modules (ACCM) facilitates students who wish to study modules on a single module basis rather than register for the full programme that contains the single module in question. Students may take up to 30 ECTS credits in one academic year. Application is made directly to ATU via the Admissions Office.

The entry requirements for access to a single module through ACCM are the same as those for a minor award at the same level.

Students may transfer from ACCM to full-time mode, but in the case of full-time undergraduate programmes, they must have completed 60 ECTS equivalent to the first stage of the programme.

4.4 Supplementary Entry and Non-Standard Entry to Year 1 Undergraduate Programmes

4.4.1   Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) Applicants

DARE is an alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges in second level education.

Applicants deemed eligible for the DARE scheme and who meet entry requirements in terms of their school-leaving examinations, are considered for admission to all level 6/7/8 undergraduate programmes at ATU with a reduced points offer, in accordance with the following criteria:

> • applicants must have a score of within 50 points of the standard points required for entry, and

> • applicants must have met all the entry requirements for the programme.

Priority is given to applicants with physical and sensory disabilities and those who are both DARE and HEAR eligible. DARE places are allocated on merit, based on LC points obtained by applicants.

At ATU, for every undergraduate programme, a minimum of 5% of places will be reserved for DARE applicants.

4.4.2   Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) Applicants

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a higher education admissions scheme for Leaving Certificate students (under 23) whose economic or social background are underrepresented in higher education.

Students deemed eligible for the HEAR scheme and who meet entry requirements in terms of their school-leaving examinations, are considered for admission to all level 6/7/8 undergraduate programmes at ATU, with a reduced points offer in accordance with the following criteria:

> • applicants must have a score of within 50 points of the standard points required for entry, and

> • applicants must have met all the entry requirements for the programme.

Priority is given to applicants with physical and sensory disabilities and those who are both DARE and HEAR eligible. HEAR places are allocated on merit, based on LC points obtained by applicants.

At ATU, for every undergraduate programme, a minimum of 5% of places will be reserved for HEAR applicants.

4.4.3   Mature Student Applicants

Mature applicants should be 23 years old on or before 1st January in the year in which they are making an application for undergraduate entry, and they must apply through the CAO by the specified date.

Mature category applicants do not have to meet the Leaving Certificate entry requirements. Applicants will be assessed on previous qualifications, experiential learning, work experience or on their personal statement. Some programmes may require applicants to submit a portfolio and/or attend for interview.

Candidates are ranked in order of merit, where the number of applications exceed the allocation of places. Mature applicants will be offered places in Round A of the CAO.

At ATU, for every undergraduate programme, a minimum of 5% of places will be reserved for mature applicants.

4.4.4   Access Programme Applicants

ATU offers two NFQ Level 6 pre-entry Access programmes which are targeted at individuals whose social, economic, and cultural experiences have prevented them from entering higher education, and in particular, those who are identified as priority groups in the current *National Access Plan (HEA, 2022).* The programmes are as follows:

- Certificate in Access for Higher Education (60 ECTS) (Year-long)
- Certificate in Access Studies (30 ECTS) (1 Semester)

On successful completion of either programme, students who have achieved an overall average of 50% or above are eligible to apply for entry to a range of level 6, 7 and 8 programmes at ATU. The quota of places available for Access Programme applicants (where applicable) will be stated on the programme webpage.

In instances where there is greater demand than available places on programmes for which a quota applies, students who have taken the 60 ECTS programme are allocated places first.

Entry requirements and eligibility for entry onto the Certificate in Access programmes will be published on the ATU website.

ATU also accepts applications from students who have undertaken an Access programme/course at another HEI.

4.4.5   Advanced Certificate – Craft Applicants (QQI Level 6)

Apprentices who have successfully completed phase 6 of the Advanced Certificate – Craft are deemed to meet the minimum entry requirements for cognate Level 6, 7 or 8 programmes offered by ATU. Application is made via the CAO.

4.4.6   Supplementary Maths Examinations

ATU will provide mathematics entry examinations (at ordinary and higher level) for students who haven't achieved the required grade in maths to meet the minimum requirements for admission to ATU programmes. This provides students who have otherwise achieved the entry requirements to ATU with another opportunity to achieve the required grade in maths. Any programme for which supplementary maths examinations cannot be used for entry will be clearly listed on any promotional material for the exams.

4.4.7   Special Case Admissions

Applicants who have experienced exceptional circumstances of a medical or personal nature in the lead-up to, or during their Leaving Certificate examination and whose performance in

that examination was negatively impacted as a result, may be considered for special case admission. ATU will consider special case admissions on a case-by-case basis.

4.5   Entry to Apprenticeship Programmes

An Apprenticeship Programme is a programme of study, leading to an award on the National Framework of Qualifications, whose outcomes fulfil the education and training required by a specific professional occupation that is approved by the National Apprenticeship Office.

ATU provides apprenticeship programmes where the learner is employed by an approved apprentice employer and is registered as an apprentice with the apprenticeship regulator, SOLAS.

The student/apprentice has formal learning for set periods in the University (off-the-job) and workplace learning under the direct guidance of a supervisor/mentor for set periods with the employer (on-the-job).

ATU offers two types of apprenticeships: Craft and Higher Education Apprenticeships.

4.5.1   Craft Apprenticeships

In order to get an apprenticeship, applicants need to have a job secured from a SOLAS approved employer. Applications for craft apprenticeships are made directly to SOLAS https://apprenticeship.ie . Applicants must be 16 years of age or over to apply and must have at least completed their Junior Cert. Once approved, applicants register with ATU. On successful completion of their training, apprentices will receive a QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate award.

4.5.2   Higher Education Apprenticeships (post-2016)

Higher Education Apprenticeships are available nationally at NFQ Levels 6-10, and ATU currently offers Higher Education apprenticeships at NFQ Levels 6-8. ATU is a Coordinating Provider for a number of Higher Education Apprenticeships, and for those apprenticeships, ATU is responsible for:

1. The development of the programme through its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAEF).
2. The establishment of the entry requirements.
3. The coordination of the delivery of the programmes with other providers under its QAF (collaborating providers).
4. The appointment of examiners.
5. The coordination of the setting and provision of assessments.
6. The provision of Programme Boards and Examination Boards.

7. The conferring of the award upon successful completion of the programme by the student/apprentice.

Entry requirements for those apprenticeship programmes for which ATU is the Coordinating Provider will be established by ATU and published on the ATU website.

The minimum entry requirements for entry to a Higher Education Apprenticeship for school leavers are the minimum requirements for LC specified in section 4.3.1.1 (for applicants to Level 6/7 apprenticeship programmes) and section 4.3.1.2 (for Level 8 apprenticeship programmes). The apprentice must be employed under an approved contract of apprenticeship for the duration of their training. Mature applicants are assessed on the basis of educational qualifications and an entrance interview.

4.6 Advanced Entry to Undergraduate Programmes

4.6.1   Advanced Entry using a QQI FET Level 6 Award

An Advanced Entry application can be used by an applicant to apply for entry to stage 2 of a programme at ATU, following completion of a QQI FET Level 6 award. Applicants will be required to present a full NFQ Level 6 QQI FET award which is in the same/cognate field of study to the programme for which advanced entry is sought and meet the entry requirements of the programme. Application is made directly to the ATU Admissions Office.

4.6.2   Articulation Agreements

ATU will engage with the FET sector, particularly in the region, to identify suitable progression pathways onto ATU programmes for holders of Level 6 Advanced Certificates and enter into partnership arrangements with them (through an Articulation Agreement). Articulation agreements enable students from partner FET institutions with a QQI FET Level 6 Advanced Certificate to enter an ATU programme with advanced standing. ATU will hold a register of such pathways and publish them on our website. Application is made directly to the ATU Admissions Office.

4.6.3   International Students

International students applying for advanced entry must present documentation and details of qualification level from the further education institution where they studied. Qualifications will be assessed for comparability with the International Student Qualifications Database which is retained in the ATU Global Office and/or the NARIC Ireland database https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-academic-recognition-information-centre.

Applicants must also meet minimum English language requirements as outlined in 4.2.3. Application is made to ATU Global.

4.6.4   Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Applicants

ATU recognises that knowledge and skills can be acquired from a range of learning experiences, including formal (certified), non-formal and informal (experiential). RPL allows students to gain entry/advanced entry to an undergraduate programme of study (with the exception of year one of full-time undergraduate programme as such applications are made to and processed by CAO) or to gain exemptions/credit from some parts of a programme, based on their prior learning. Our *AQAE009 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy* ensures that assessment of prior learning at ATU is approached and facilitated in a manner which is fair, equitable and transparent; and upholds the academic integrity of all programmes of study and awards provided by the University.

4.7   Entry and Admission to Post-graduate Programmes

4.7.1   General requirements

All applications to post-graduate programmes are made directly to ATU, (except for funded/subsidised labour market activation/workforce development programmes, e.g. Springboard+). Offers of places are made in accordance with published entry criteria for each programme. As applications are generally assessed on a rolling basis, applicants are not necessarily ranked relative to one another.

The RPL process allows students to gain entry/advanced entry to a post-graduate programme of study or to gain exemptions/credit from some parts of a programme, based on their prior learning, in accordance with ATU's *AQAE009 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.*

International applicants for ILEP-Listed ATU full-time, add-on and postgraduate programmes are required to apply to ATU Global by the 31st May of the year of entry. Later applications may be accepted. All information for international applicants will be available on ATU's International webpage https://www.atu.ie/international. Determinations on candidate qualifications and the availability of places are made by the Head of Department concerned, and the Head of Department may be consulted on the eligibility of candidates.

Final admission decisions on all post-graduate applications are the responsibility of the VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar, a decision which he/she may delegate to the Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) or another Manager.

4.7.2   Taught Post-Graduate Programmes and Structured Masters

The normal minimum entry requirement for a taught post-graduate programme (Level 8 Higher Diploma and Level 9 Masters programmes) is minimum of a 2.2 honours degree (Level 8) in a relevant discipline. Other entry requirements may be specified and approved when the programme is validated and will be listed in the prospectus/website.

4.7.3   Research Degrees

4.7.3.1 Master's Degree (Research)

The normal entry requirement for entry to Master's Degree (Research) is minimum of a 2.2 honours degree (Level 8) in a relevant discipline, as outlined in *AQAE011 Research Degree Policy.*

4.7.3.2 Doctoral Degree

ATU offers two doctoral degree programmes: Doctor of Philosophy/PhD and Professional Doctorate. The academic entry requirements for admission to a PhD or a Professional Doctorate at ATU are outlined in *AQAE011 Research Degree Policy*.

All registered research degree students must renew their registration annually. Renewal of registration is dependent on the payment of fees and a successful outcome to the Annual Review Process (as outlined in section 4.11 of *AQAE011 Research Degree Policy*).

4.7.4   International Students

The qualifications for international applicants for entry or transfer to postgraduate programmes will be assessed for comparability with the *International Student Qualifications Database* which is retained in the ATU Global Office and/or the NARIC Ireland database https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-academic-recognition-information-centre.

International applicants are required to show equivalent competency in English by achieving the minimum standard in a recognised English language test, as outlined in section 4.2.3.

4.8 Entry and Admission to Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental and Micro-credential awards

ATU is committed to offering a broad range of online, flexible and professional development programme offerings, in line with our strategic objective and commitment to lifelong and life-wide learning and to ensuring progression and professional development opportunities for graduates.

Delivery formats (e.g. asynchronous online, synchronous online, on-campus, blended) and timeframes will ensure that learning takes place at a time and pace which facilitates balance between life and work commitments for the student.

All applications to online, flexible programmes/micro-credentials are made directly to ATU, apart from externally funded/subsidised labour market activation/workforce development programmes (e.g. Springboard+).

Final admission decisions on all applications are the responsibility of the VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar, a decision which he/she may delegate to the Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) or another Manager.

4.8.1   General entry requirements

For all minor, special purpose, supplemental awards and micro-credentials, there are specific entry requirements which applicants must meet in order to be accepted onto the course. Depending upon the level, in addition to minimum entry requirements, certain subjects or industry experience may be needed to gain admission. Full details on the entry requirements for all programmes are available on the ATU website.

4.8.2   Minor Awards

Minor awards form part of a major award and provide recognition for achievement of a range of learning outcomes, but not the specific combination required for a major award. The combination of modules is a subset of a linked major award. The minimum entry requirements for minor awards are determined at validation and depend on the level and stage of the major award which the predominance of modules in the minor award derive from (e.g. a level 7 minor award where the modules are from stage 3 of a Bachelor programme would normally require the applicant to hold a relevant level 6 major award).

4.8.3   Special Purpose Awards (SPAs)

Special Purpose Awards are standalone awards and have a distinct identity which reflects their clearly defined but relatively narrow purpose. They constitute a smaller volume of learning than a major award. The combination of modules is not included within a major award but may comprise learning outcomes that also form part of major awards.

The minimum entry requirements for SPAs offered by ATU at levels 6-8 on the NFQ require that normally, an applicant seeking entry for a SPA at a given NFQ Level must fulfil the minimum entry requirements for stage 1 of an ab initio programme at the same level.

An applicant seeking entry for a SPA at level 9 must hold a major award at level 8.

For all SPAs, the Programme Board may specify higher and/or more specific entry requirements at validation or during a revision or review.

4.8.4   Supplemental Award

Supplemental awards are for learning that is additional to a previous major or special purpose award. In general, these are at the same level as the awards to which they are additional, and applicants are required to hold an award at that level.

4.8.5   Micro-credential Award

Micro-credentials offered by ATU are in the range of 5 – 15 ECTS credits to comprise a *single* module, regardless of credit volume. Students who successfully complete an ATU micro-credential will be awarded a verifiable digital certificate.

The minimum entry requirements for micro-credential offered by ATU at levels 6-8 on the NFQ require that normally, an applicant seeking entry for a micro-credential at a given NFQ Level must hold the minimum entry requirements for stage 1 of an ab initio programme at the same level. An applicant seeking entry for a micro-credential at level 9 must normally hold a major award at level 8.

At ATU, for micro-credentials to be stackable towards an award, they must be pre-validated as part of the programme leading to the award. Entry requirements for micro-credentials will be published on the ATU website.

4.9 Admission to Externally Funded Labour Market Activation/ Workforce Development Programmes

ATU participates in a number of Government funded initiatives designed to support people back into employment, improve the skills of those in employment, and to build the supply of skilled graduates to meet current and future skill needs, by providing heavily subsidised micro-credentials, special purpose awards, minor awards and major awards at NFQ levels 6-9.

Applications to government funded/subsided labour market activation programmes of this nature are made on the relevant website (for example, applications for Springboard+ are made via https://springboardcourses.ie/about). Offers of places are made in accordance with the published entry requirements and eligibility criteria which are determined by the funding body.

4.10   Erasmus+

Erasmus+ offers the opportunity for ATU to host incoming students and staff from higher education institutions with which we have signed inter-institutional agreements.

The study activities offered to incoming students must be part of the student's study programme. As a 'receiving organisation', ATU (as well as the student), must sign a *Learning Agreement* before the start of the activities, outlining:

- the educational components to be carried out by the student at the receiving institution,

- the educational components to be replaced in the student's degree at the Sending Institution upon successful completion of the study programme abroad, and
- the rights and obligations of the various parties.

Erasmus+ students are registered students of ATU for the duration of their placement and accumulate ECTS credits for modules undertaken at ATU.

Applications for an Erasmus mobility to undergraduate and post-graduate programmes are made directly to ATU Global at the relevant campus.

4.11   Transfer

The University anticipates that students embark on programmes with a view to fulfilling the requirements of that programme and obtaining the requisite award. However, we recognise that there are instances where students will wish to transfer to an alternative programme of study.

To facilitate transfer in such instances we will:

- provide common entry programmes (where possible) which support transfer of students to programmes of specialisation having fulfilled the requirements of the first stage of the programme,
- provide an early internal transfer opportunity to new students,
- provide continuing students an opportunity to transfer to another cognate ATU programme,
- consider applications from students of another HEI onto a programme, and
- provide access to support services to help students evaluate their options.

A record of all applications, reasons for transfer and the outcome must be recorded in writing and the record maintained by the Admissions Office. Data regarding transfers will be reported annually to Academic Council.

4.11.1 Common Entry Programmes

We provide a common entry programme in many disciplines. Common entry programmes give students the opportunity to complete a common first/first and second stage and delay the decision of specialisation in that discipline. Following successful completion of Stage 1/Stage 2 of the common entry programme, students apply to transfer to their chosen, specialised programme.

The following criteria apply:

1. Transfer to Stage 2/3 from a common entry programme only applies to validated transfer routes to specialised programmes.

2. If demand exceeds capacity for a particular transfer, students will be ranked according to their Stage 1 GPA for selection purposes.

4.11.2 Internal Early Transfer for New Undergraduate Students

Internal Early Transfer facilitates new students who have entered a full-time programme through the CAO process transferring to another ATU full-time programme listed with the CAO. Internal Early Transfer applies to students who have accepted an ATU offer via CAO and are registered on Stage 1 of that ATU programme in the current year.

The following criteria apply:

1. A place must be available on the programme to which the transfer is sought.
2. Applicants must have achieved the minimum entry requirements and have attained at least the minimum of the cut off points for the programme which they wish to transfer onto.
3. Applications for transfers during the CAO Season will normally only be permitted for programmes listed on CAO Available Places. However, if wait lists are exhausted, transfers can be considered.
4. Once the CAO Season has closed, internal early transfers will be considered.
5. Where the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of places available, applicants will be ranked on their points, and random selection will apply where appropriate.
6. Once a student has been granted a transfer following the Internal Early Transfer process, it will not be possible to return to the previous programme.

4.11.3 Internal Transfer for Continuing Students

The University endeavours to facilitate students who wish to transfer to another ATU programme.

Internal Transfer of Continuing Students is subject to the following criteria:

1. There are places available on the chosen programme.
2. The chosen programme is at, or below the same NFQ Level as the applicant's current programme.
3. The applicant must have passed the previous stage of their current programme.
4. Transfer to Stage 2 or higher of a programme requires the relevant Head of Department to verify that the learning outcomes attained to that point by the applicant are commensurate with that of the chosen programme.

For continuing students who wish to transfer to stage 1 of a different programme at ATU, criteria 1-4 outlined in 4.11.2 also apply. Students transferring to stage 1 of another programme, having completed one or more stages of another programme, will be liable for

fees, in accordance with criteria set out by the HEA for the Free Fees Initiative.
https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/course-fees/

Internal transfers are not possible for some programmes which are regulated by a professional body.

4.11.3.1 Internal Transfer on Health and Safety Grounds

Where it emerges that a student, at any stage of their programme, is exposed to health and safety risks that cannot be mitigated, ATU will endeavour to make a place available to the student on another programme that does not have the same exposure.

4.11.4 External Transfer Applicants

External Transfer facilitates students who have completed part of their studies (a NFQ Level 6, 7 or 8 programme) at another Higher Education Institution (HEI) and who wish to transfer to a cognate ATU programme. External transfer is not permitted for some programmes which are regulated by a professional body.

An applicant must be currently completing, or have successfully completed, a minimum of one year of study at Level 6, 7 or 8 in a HEI.

The following criteria apply:

1. External transfers must only be offered if there are places available on the chosen programmes.
2. External transfers are permitted for programmes at, or below the same NFQ Level as the applicant's current programme.
3. To be eligible to transfer to Stage 2 or higher of a programme, the applicant must have passed the previous stage of their current programme.
4. Transfer to Stage 2 or higher of a programme requires the relevant Head of Department to verify that the level, learning outcomes and credits attained by the applicant to that point are commensurate with that of the chosen programme. Where learning gaps are identified, the student may be required to undertake bridging modules prior to entry.
5. Applicants who do not have sufficient relevant credits for Stage 2 admission should apply via CAO for Stage 1 and, on admission, seek Recognition of Prior Learning for relevant modules.
6. For ATU to make an award, at least half the overall programme credits must have been earned in ATU. Exemptions cannot be gained for more than 50% of credits in an award year.

4.12 Progression

4.12.1 Stage-based Progression

Stage-based progression refers to the successful completion of a stage of a programme which allow students to progress to the next stage of that programme. In ATU, there are no barriers to a student progressing from one semester to the next, within a stage.

Upon successful completion of all the requirements of a programme an award is conferred on a student.

The rules governing stage-based progression and successful completion of an award are specified in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy*.

4.12.2 Progression Routes

We are committed to the provision of higher education progression routes following the successful completion of any ATU programme. All ATU programmes lead to an award on the NFQ, are designed using ECTS and are structured to provide students with a 'ladder of opportunity' to progress through levels 6 to 10 of the NFQ (see *AQAE004 Programme Design Policy* for further detail).

Embracing the ethos of lifelong learning, we provide progression routes that facilitate upward progression on the ladder of opportunity and those that are may be on the same level (advanced stage) of the NFQ.

The University will:

- provide clear information to students on the various progression routes available upon successful completion of their chosen programme to another programme of study,
- encourage the inclusion of embedded programmes in the design of new programmes,
- review progression routes for students during periodic programmatic review,
- provide Special Purpose Awards, Supplemental Awards and Micro-credentials in support of lifelong learning,
- pursue strategic partnerships which facilitate progression of graduates, and
- provide access to support services to help students evaluate their options.

4.12.3 Ladder-based Progression

ATU facilitates progression to Level 7 programmes following successful completion of a Level 6 Higher Certificate, and to Level 8 programmes following successful completion of a Level 7 Bachelor's degree programme. These are considered as admission to a different programme. This applies whether the graduate progresses to an add-on programme or enters the advanced stage of an ab-initio programme.

ATU will publish criteria for admission to add-on programmes on the Entry Requirements Section of the programme webpage.

4.12.4 Monitoring Completion and Progression

ATU will collect and return student performance, progression, and completion data via the Student Record System to the HEA on an annual basis.

The University will participate in the Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS), an annual voluntary survey of graduates nine months after graduation. ATU will conduct the survey and return data to the HEA for publication.

4.13   Deferral of Entry, Leave of Absence, Withdrawal and Readmission

4.13.1 Deferral of Entry: CAO Applicants

An applicant with an offer of a CAO place may apply to defer uptake of the place to the following year. Deferral requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and a range of factors will be taken into consideration including demand for the programme, nature of the offer and reasons set out by the applicant. Applicants will be required to provide the reason for their request.

Deferrals may be granted on the basis of certified illness, family bereavement or similarly serious grounds. Formal documentation from appropriately certified professionals must be provided. In order to ensure adequate places for the following year's applicants, there is a limit, normally 5% of places, on the number of deferrals which can be granted on each programme.

Other than in exceptional circumstances deferrals will not be granted for late CAO round offers, mature entry to high demand programmes, or for QQI FET nursing offers.

Applicants who are given permission to defer entry in the intervening year must not:

- Attend a Higher Education Institution (this does not include 1-year QQI-FET courses at Further Education Institutions), *or*

- Repeat the Leaving Certificate examination with the intention of applying for a different third-level programme.

To do so will mean the deferral lapses and the applicant must compete for a place in the normal way.

If an applicant accepts/defers a later offer through CAO, the deferral is automatically cancelled.

Deferral requests must be made to the Admissions Office well in advance of the reply date on the CAO offer. If the offer is not accepted or deferred by the reply date, the offer is no longer valid and cannot be deferred.

4.13.2 Leave of Absence (LOA) (For Registered Students)

During their studies, a student may encounter a change in their personal or financial circumstances that requires them to take a break from their studies. In such instances a student can apply to defer their programme and take a leave of absence until the next academic year. A LOA for registered students may be granted for the following reasons:

- Certified prolonged medical condition,
- Significant change in employment or family circumstances,
- Maternity or Carers leave,
- Long-term financial hardship.

The expectation is that a student will return to their programme within a twelve-month period.

A student in Stage 1 of a full-time undergraduate programme may not apply for a Leave of Absence until after the sixth week of the first semester.

4.13.3 Withdrawal

The University recognises that occasionally students may decide to leave the University without completing their programme (withdrawal).

The University will endeavour to provide support to assist students to make an informed decision. Students will be offered support and guidance which may allow the student to continue their studies (where feasible and/or desirable) and provide the student with the option to defer. In all cases it is the policy of the University to provide guidance and support to students so that they are aware of all their options should they want to return to third level education at a later stage.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that if they decide to leave their programme, they formally inform the University by completing and submitting the *AQAE0YY Student Withdrawal Form.*

When a student notifies ATU that they are exiting from their programme of study, their registration is terminated, and they are no longer a student at the University (effective from the date on which they formally submit the withdrawal notification to the Admissions Office).

4.13.3.1 Exit Award

A student who does not complete the requirements of the programme for which they are, or were registered, but who has gained the credits and achieved the learning outcomes specified for an embedded award can apply to exit with the embedded award.

As a minimum, a student who successfully completes a module/s may apply to be awarded a certificate for those modules which they have successfully completed.

A student seeking an exit award must formally apply for same. Decisions in respect of the granting of exit awards are made by an Examination Board on a case-by-case basis.

Full-time students registered on either an ab initio ordinary Bachelor Degree programme or ab initio Honours Bachelor Degree programme, who do not continue their studies, may apply to have a Higher Certificate or Ordinary Bachelor Degree awarded respectively as appropriate, provided they:

- meet the learning outcomes of the award,

- have earned sufficient ECTS credits, and

- such an embedded or exit award has been approved by the Academic Council.

4.13.4 Re-admission to a Programme

Re-admission to a programme is possible after an absence. However, it may be the case that if a learner returns to a programme after a long period of absence, that previous successful learning may have become outdated and/or programme and/or module learning outcomes may have changed, or the programme may no longer exist.

It is necessary that the currency of learning of students on ATU programmes is up to date to ensure the academic quality of the programme, and to confirm that the ultimate award is an accurate reflection of the learning achieved.

If a former student seeks to return to a programme (to accumulate credits for a final award) after an absence of five years or more, or where there has been a revision to the programme during the student's absence, the Head of Department (or nominee) with responsibility for the programme is required to verify that the learner's previous successful learning is still current. If vetting is a requirement of the programme, a returning student may be required to be re-vetted if their previous vetting clearance has lapsed.

The former student should submit an application form to the Admissions Office. If it is determined that the previous learning is still up to date, the student may re-register on the programme, if it exists. In cases where the learning for a programme is not up to date the student may be advised to re-register for a lower stage of the programme and/or undertake bridging modules.

4.14 Appeal of Non-Admission Decisions

All decisions of the University outside of the CAO entry process in respect of access, transfer or progression applications are subject to appeal by the candidate.

Applicants to any ATU programme who feel their application has not been fairly assessed should contact the Admissions Office in the first instance. The Admissions Office will undertake a re-check of the application form and supporting documentation to ensure that no errors were made in the process.

If the applicant has already contacted the Admissions Office and the matter cannot be resolved locally, a formal appeal may be lodged to the Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) of ATU on one or both of the following grounds:

- Incorrect process; specific evidence of irregularity in the applications assessment process, and/or
- Specified/stated grounds where the decision was based on misinterpretation of data or information provided as part of the application process.

The Academic Affairs Manager will endeavour to reply to appeals within 5-7 working days. If the outcome of the appeal does not satisfy the applicant, a further and final appeal may be made to the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar or nominee.

4.15 Responsibilities

4.15.1 Academic Council

Academic Council has a statutory responsibility to control the academic affairs of the University, including approving entry criteria and minimum entry requirements for all programmes provided by ATU.

The Postgraduate Research Advisory Committee (PRAC) is a sub-committee of the Research & Innovation Committee of Academic Council, and reviews all applications for admission, confirmation, and transfer processes of research degree programmes.

4.15.2 Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar (VPAAR)

The Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar has overall responsibility, acting under delegated authority from Academic Council, for the admission of students to the University and for ensuring compliance with published entry criteria for all programme offered by the University.

4.15.3 Vice President Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and Online Flexible & Professional Development (OFPD)

The Vice President EDI and OFPD leads the OFPD team in managing the applications process, student experience, and supporting Faculties in the provision of OFPD programmes, as well as supporting educational technology and associated training for OFPD, in partnership with ATU Teaching & Learning Centre.

4.15.4 Vice President Students, Teaching and Learning

The Vice President Students, Teaching & Learning has overall responsibility for the student experience in the University, including widening access initiatives, disability supports and preparing students for progression to employment.

The Office of the Vice President Students, Teaching & Learning will prepare an annual report which sets out developments and progress pertinent to this policy, to include widening access initiatives, disability and learning supports and career development initiatives.

4.15.5 Admissions Office

The Admissions Office of ATU processes all undergraduate applications for all EU students. This includes all applications through CAO, advanced entry, transfers, and direct entry. The Admissions Office works closely with all Heads of Schools and Heads of Departments to ensure entry requirements are being met, and that we are upholding a level of Academic quality. The Admissions Office also works with the Marketing and School Liaison Offices to ensure publications and website content are accurate and up to date. The Office liaises with OFPD and ATU Global to ensure every applicant is treated fairly and consistently, and with the Registration, Fees and Grants Office to assist with ensuring all students records are uploaded onto the student record system, and that records are accurate and up to date.

4.15.6 Online Flexible and Professional Development (OFPD) Office

The OFPD Office of ATU processes applications for all other programmes for all EU students. This includes all applications through funding initiatives of the government e.g. Springboard+, online/blended programmes, part-time undergraduate, full-time and part-time postgraduate, and micro-credentials. The OFPD office works closely with the Admissions Office, all Heads of Faculty, Schools and Departments to ensure entry requirements are being met and that we are upholding a level of Academic quality. The OFPD Office also works with the Marketing Office to ensure publications and website content are accurate and up to date. The OFPD function also provides supports services to Faculties, Schools and Departments such as business development, student supports, supporting the development of new programmes as well as supporting educational technology and associated training and innovation.

4.15.7 Heads of Department (HoD)

The HoD or their nominee will assist the Admissions Office and OFPD Office with processing of applications for entry, advanced entry, transfer and RPL by providing academic judgement and advice, as required.

4.15.8 ATU Global

ATU Global processes applications for all international students wishing to study at ATU. This includes all non-EU applicants to full-time undergraduate programmes, all international applicants to part-time, flexible undergraduate programmes, and all applicants to ATU post-graduate programmes. ATU Global works closely with Heads of Schools and Departments in assessing applications to ensure minimum entry requirements are met and works with the Admissions Office in supporting the registration process for international students. ATU Global is also responsible for student mobility programmes, including Erasmus+. The Office supports applicants from initial enquiry stage, through to application, immigration, arrival, registration and orientation.

4.15.9 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Unit

The ATU RPL Unit supports and guides applicants seeking RPL for entry onto a programme of study and module exemptions for registered students. For applicants seeking to avail of RPL for access/advanced entry, a member of the RPL Unit will meet the applicant, discuss their prior learning experiences with them and guide the applicant through the RPL process. The RPL Unit will liaise with the HoD, Faculty Office, Admissions Office, OFPD Office and Quality Office as required throughout the application and admission processes.

5. Associated Documents Generated by this Policy

AQAEXXX Procedure for Admissions
AQAEXXX Procedure for Student Transfer
AQAEXXX Procedure for Student Withdrawal
AQAEXXX Procedure for Repository of Specific Entry Requirements (ROSER)
AQAE032 Procedure for Deferral of Modules and Programmes
AQAEXXX Procedure for Appeal of Non-Admission Decision
AQAEYYY_000 Direct Application Form
AQAEYYY_000 Admissions Appeal Form
AQAEYYY_000 Re-admission Application Form
AQAE031_002 Application for Programme Deferral (Leave of Absence)
AQAEYYY_000 CAO Deferral Form
AQAEYYY_000 Internal Transfer Form
AQAEYYY_000 Student Withdrawal Form

6. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	New Policy Approved by Academic Council	19/04/2024