



Procedure for Applying for an Exit Award or an Award by Accumulation of Awards/Credits

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1. Purpose

This procedure supports Atlantic Technological University (ATU) *AQAE067 Awards, Certification and Conferring Policy* which sets out the awards made by ATU and the parameters for the provision of certification for student learning and conferring of awards on students.

The purpose of this procedure is to set out how a student can apply for an award that is not their registered programme of study but is either a validated embedded award of their registered programme i.e. an exit award or, a major award where the student has met the requirements and credits by completion of two or more ATU awards or modules i.e. an award on the basis of accumulation (or stacking) of already completed awards.

It sets out the circumstances under which an embedded award may be made to a student who is continuing their studies on a programme. It also sets out the regulations in regard to early re-entry of a student following approval of an exit award.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all ATU taught programmes and to all students and staff of ATU.

It applies to applications to exit with an award and applications for accumulated awards in respect of ATU programmes and programmes from the antecedent institutions and colleges.

3. Reference Documents

None Applicable.

4. Procedure

4.1 Introduction

To provide for flexibility of access and recognition of learning to students in adverse circumstances, ATU normally incorporate one or more embedded awards into level 7, 8 and level 9 major and *ab initio* taught programmes. A student may apply to exit with one of these embedded awards. The provision of such exit pathways supports students in the later stages of their registered programme to gain an academic qualification and /or to enable them to gain employment with an award. The award is not for the programme to which

they were initially registered but corresponds to a validated embedded award on the NFQ and certifies completion of the requirements of that embedded programme.

The provision of pathways to accumulate credit and awards into a major award also supports the intention of ATU to provide alternative and flexible pathways and opportunities for advancement of students through to higher academic qualifications.

4.2 Definitions

Definitions relevant to this procedure are below. Further definitions may be found in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy and AQAE067 Awards, Certification and Conferring Policy*

An **embedded award** is a programme pathway designed for and incorporated within, a major award. It may be a major award in its own right or it may be minor, special purpose or supplemental award. The embedded award at a lower NFQ level and/or credit volume and is identified as part of the validation and approval process for the major award.

An **Exit Award** is an award granted to a student who does not complete in full the programme on which they are registered but has successfully achieved the required learning outcomes and credits for an embedded award within the registered programme.

4.3 Exit Awards

4.3.1 Eligibility

The general conditions of eligibility for an Exit award are:

- (i) The programme on which the student has been registered, must have a validated embedded award.
- (ii) The student must have met the requirements as set out in the Approved Programme schedule (APS) of the embedded award in full, before making an application.
- (iii) The student must be in good standing with the university in relation to fees and the Student Code of Conduct, before making an application.
- (iv) Exit awards are not intended for students who require a break from their studies for a short period of time but intend to return and complete their registered programme. In this case the student may defer their programme and return to complete their registered programme at a later date. See further details in *AQAE032 Procedure for Deferral of Modules and Programmes*.

4.3.2 Limitation on re-registration

There is an exclusion period for a student who was approved and graduated with an exit award, to re-register on the programme they exited, or progress to a more advanced stage of any other related ATU programme. The exclusion period is a minimum of one academic year from the date of their application for the exit award. For example,

- a student who applied for an exit award after the Summer examination session in 2025/26, cannot re-enter the same or an advanced stage of a related programme until the start of the academic year 2027/28.
- a student who applied for an exit award after the Winter examination session in 2025/26, cannot re-enter the same or an advanced stage of a related programme until the start of the academic year 2027/28.

Within this period of exclusion, a student shall be entitled to apply for admission into stage 1 or other stages of an unrelated ATU programme based on the normal admission criteria and processes.

If a student is re-admitted to a programme after the exclusion period, they do not need to relinquish their exit award parchment.

Where in doubt, the academic department should refer the final decision on the re-admission of existing learner within the period of exclusion to the Director of Academic Affairs and Quality for a final decision.

4.3.3 Early Re-entry

In some exceptional cases, the circumstances which caused a student to apply and be approved for an exit award, may unexpectedly cease to exist early on in the normal exclusion period of one year. Early re-entry may be permitted in such instances where the immediate return of the student to the relevant stage of the originally registered programme would be the most reasonable course of action.

Where the student can show that the unexpected change in their circumstances would justify the setting aside of the normal exclusion period and with the explicit support of the Head of Department, the student can make a written submission for early re-entry to the programme to the Director of Academic Affairs and Quality.

In consultation with the Head of Department and any other person they deem necessary, the Director of Academic Affairs and Quality will decide to grant or deny immediate re-entry. The decision of the Director of Academic Affairs and Quality is final and cannot be appealed to any higher authority in the University.

Should the exit awards already have been issued or presented to the student, and permission to re-enter is granted, the student must relinquish and return the parchment to the ATU Examination Office before they can be allowed to re-register.

4.3.4 Application for Exit Award

The student must make an application to exit with an embedded award by completing *AQAE072_001 Application to Exit with an Embedded Award Form* on-line in the student hub. The student must provide

- Student Name and Student Number
- The reason for requesting the Exit award
- An indication of the embedded award being requested.
- A personal email address for any queries in relation to the processing of the application (where the student is no longer a registered student)

The system will automatically identify the student programme code and stage through the active directory if the student is currently registered. If the student is no longer a registered student, they will need to provide their previous student number, programme name and code.

The student will be asked to confirm that they understand the restrictions on re-entry to the programme and agree to these conditions before application.

Once submitted the student will receive an acknowledgement of the application and a copy of the application form.

4.3.5 Approval

The application form will be notified to an administrator in the faculty who will update the application form in consultation with the Head of Department and

- (i) confirm that there is a validated embedded award in the Register of University programmes (RUP),
- (ii) identify the correct programme code and the title of the exit award,
- (iii) upload the relevant page from the Broadsheet(s) of result showing that the student has met the academic standards, the credit requirements and has an entitlement to the award,
- (iv) enter the % GPA and Award Classification for the exit award.

If the exit award is an unclassified (non-major award) the Head of Department can approve the application directly.

If the exit award is a major award and the indicated award classification is outside of the limits for consideration as a borderline case and there are no implications for capping of repeated grades as set out in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy*, the Head of Department can approve the application directly.

Otherwise, the application and relevant page of the broadsheet is brought to an Examination Board to consider any requirement for capping of grades or any consideration of borderline GPA to ensure the exit award meets the regulations set out in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy*. If the Examination Board makes a recommendation for change to a historical grade (either to cap or to increase a grade) the administrator in the Department coordinates with the Examination Office to process a change to the historical grade by initiating a *AQAE041_002 Post Board Change Request Form*. The Examination Office will make the change, re-issue Statement of Examination Results and notify the administrator. The administrator uploads the revised broadsheet(s) of results to the application. Once this is complete, the Head of Department approves the application following the decision of the Examination Board.

The award title should be the named award at the time the student completed the academic requirements for the embedded programme, in the case where a Programme Title has been changed.

4.3.6 Notification of Outcome and Processing

If there is no validated exit award or the student has not met the credit requirement for the exit award, the administrator in the faculty should provide a reason and indicate that the application is not approved.

Once the Head of Department submits the 'approve' or 'not approve' in the automated system the outcome will be sent automatically to the student and the Examination Office. Once the Examination office is notified of an approved application, they will arrange for the specific Exit award code / programme to be set up on Banner by the Quality office, if not already in existence.

The exit award will be processed by the Examination Office as set out in the *WS010 Work Sheet for Quality Office and Exams Processing of Exit Awards* and moved to the relevant graduation status.

4.3.7 Time limitations and Conferring

There is a limit of three years since last registration in which a student can make an application for an exit award. Exit awards will not be approved for applications received after this time period.

The award date on the exit award parchment will be the award date relevant to the current academic year and conferring session. A student who applies for and is approved to exit with an embedded major award, is eligible to be invited to the next conferring ceremony.

All applications must be submitted by mid September and approved by the faculty by end of September to be included in the Autumn conferring. All applications must be submitted by mid February and approved by end of February to be considered for the Spring conferring. The exact dates will be set out in the Academic Calendar each year. Applications not approved by these dates may continue to progress through administrative steps to graduated status, however they may not be included in the upcoming conferring. The Academic Affairs Manager with responsibility for Examinations, Conferring and Timetabling has the sole discretion to issue parchments for late applications or to include them in the next conferring ceremony.

Once a student has graduated and received their parchment, the award classification cannot be amended. If a student is not satisfied with the award classification and has grounds for a Review or Appeal of a grade, this must be raised at the time of approval of the exit award through the *AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal*. The invitation to conferring may be withheld to a later ceremony, pending the confirmation of the award classification through the outcome of the Review or Appeal.

4.4 Embedded Awards for Continuing Students

In exceptional circumstances, as approved by Academic Council, ATU may confer embedded awards on cohorts of students who are continuing their studies.

This may arise for example where students need evidence of a certain level of educational attainment to be eligible for specific roles, for economic benefit or to meet the requirement of a statutory authority and where the level of educational attainment must be confirmed through the presence of a parchment.

These specified embedded awards are approved by Academic Council and listed in Appendix 1. If the specified award is required by a full student cohort, the senior administrator in the department will confirm the list of students whose performance has been considered by the Examination Board and recommended for the specified embedded award, to the Examination Office. If the full class cohort do not require the specified embedded award an individual student *AQAE072_001 Application to Exit with an Embedded Award Form* on-line in the student hub and the Head of Department (on nominee) will confirm through their approval that the application for the award is demonstrably tied to the purpose specified by the student.

The list in Appendix 1 may be updated from time to time to add or remove awards on the approval of Academic Council without impact on the other parts of this procedure.

Students are not invited to a conferring ceremony for such awards and parchments are called *in absentia* at the conferring ceremony (where applicable). No administration fee will be charged in the case of embedded awards for continuing students.

4.5 Major Award by Accumulated Awards

A student who has successfully completed two or more ATU Minor, Supplemental awards and/or module(s), which meet the exact requirements of a major award, may be eligible to apply to obtain the major award (i.e. an award by stacking of awards).

4.5.1 Eligibility

The general conditions of eligibility for accumulated credits / awards

- (i) The minor awards / modules being stacked must match exactly to the Approved Programme Schedule (APS) of the Major Award.
- (ii) The stacked award must be a major award.
- (iii) The student must have completed all of the relevant credits and modules.
- (iv) The student must have paid all fees up to the point at which they are approved for the stacked award.
- (v) The student must meet the admission requirement for direct entry onto the relevant stage of the stacked award (excluding the modules/awards being stacked) in accordance with the requirements of *AQAE037 Access Transfer and Progression Policy*.
- (vi) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) may be used to meet admission requirements to stage 1 or for advanced entry to the relevant stage of the stacked award, but the same learning must not have been used (or double counted) to meet the accumulated credits that are being used to obtain the new award.
- (vii) The currency of the ECTS credits towards the stacked award must be considered. A student may be required to undertake additional interview, assessment or credit to ensure the currency of the award.
- (viii) There is a limit of 3 years since last registration in which an application must be approved to be granted the award.
- (ix) Joint awards are not eligible unless the stacked award is an approved pathway with the joint provider(s).
- (x) The student must understand and agree that by applying for the stacked award, the minor awards / modules that make up the stacked award are superseded, will be revoked digitally and cannot continue be used by the student as a separate qualification.

- (xi) Where a student is eligible for two awards in one academic year the highest NFQ level award will be granted only. Where in doubt, the decision on the award to be granted should be referred to the Director of Academic Affairs and Quality for a final decision.

4.5.2 Application for Stacked Award

ATU recognises that the administration of applications for stacked awards is complex and requires sufficient lead-in time to verify both admission requirements and the completion of all required modules and credits. If possible the student should register on the major award rather than on the individual minor / supplemental award at the final stage of the accumulation of awards. If this is not possible the following steps are completed to verify and approve the application for the stacked award.

(i) **Initiation of Application**

- The application process **must be initiated prior to the completion** of the final award contributing to the stacked award.
- Students submit the prescribed form (**AQAE072_002 Application for an Award by Accumulation of Awards**) following the release of **provisional Winter examination results** (or in line with alternative timelines set out in Table 1).

The student must provide:

- Documentation confirming results from completed awards
- Details of any currently registered awards
- Evidence demonstrating that the admission requirements for the relevant stage of the major award are met, in accordance with the APS and *AQAE037 Access, Transfer and Progression Policy*
-

(ii) **Faculty Administrative Assessment**

The Faculty will:

- Review the application to confirm that the **correct major award has been identified**
- Verify alignment between the major award and the completed awards and awards currently being undertaken (if applicable).

Where the application is deemed correct, it shall be forwarded to the **Admissions Office**.

(iii) **Admissions Office Assessment**

The Admissions Office will:

- Assess whether the applicant meets the **admission requirements**
- Refer for **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** assessment where applicable

- Refer to the Registration Office to make applicable change in the SRS where applicable
- Notify the faculty of the outcome
 - If requirements are met, the application progresses to approval
 - If requirements are not met, the application is returned with reasons

This stage must be completed within the prescribed timelines (see Table 1).

(iv) Registration office Assessment

The registration office will move the student to the correct accumulated award programme code in conjunction with the Quality office.

(v) Final Verification and Examination Board Submission

Upon completion of all required awards, the Faculty Administration shall:

- Generate the broadsheet for consideration of the major award by the relevant Examination Board.

(vi) Timing constraints

Submitted Applications can only be processed to completion once the student has accumulated all the credit for the award. Hence a student cannot be considered in the same Examination session for an individual SPA / minor award / module and the stacked award.

Table 1 indicates the timelines and deadlines for application, admission assessment, and application approval. Late applications will only be considered in the subsequent Examination session.

Stage	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Application started	After Winter examination session	After Summer Examination session	After the Autumn Examination session
Confirmation the Major award is correct faculty	Completed by 01 Apr	Completed by 01 Aug	Completed by 01 Oct
Assessment of admission requirements	Completed by 01 May	Completed 01 Sep	Completed 01 Nov
Completion of awards to be accumulated into the major award	Summer Examination Boards June	Autumn Examination Boards September	Winter Examination boards February

Upload of all completed award documentation	Submitted by 01 August	Submitted by 01 January	Submitted by 01 April
Examination board to ratify the major award from accumulated awards	Autumn Examination Board	Winter Examination Board	Summer Examination Board
Conferring	Autumn October/November	Spring April/May	Autumn October/ November

Table 1: Process timelines for a Major Award on the basis of accumulated credit / awards.

4.5.3 Classification

The Examination Board confirms a student's eligibility for an award based on the credits accumulated and recommends the award classification. As final results have already been confirmed for all modules, **individual module marks cannot be increased** for the purpose of borderline classification for this type of award.

The classification is determined solely by the GPA, in accordance with the grade bands set out in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy*. Where more than 10 ECTS have been repeated, the award will be conferred as unclassified.

4.5.4 Notification of Outcome and Processing

After the Examination Board, the form is forwarded to the Examinations Office who make the relevant changes to the student graduation record on the Student Record System (SRS) and will then notify the student of the award classification of the Major award. The digital certification for the individual minor award/ modules that make up the major award may be revoked electronically.

An administration fee will be charged in accordance with the ATU Fee Schedule which must be paid promptly by the student prior to any invitation to conferring.

Once a student has graduated and received their parchment, the award classification cannot be amended. If a student is not satisfied with the award classification and has grounds for a Review or Appeal of a grade, this must be raised at the time of notification of the outcome of the stacked award application through the *AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal*. The invitation to conferring may be withheld to a later ceremony, pending the confirmation of the award classification through the outcome of the Review or Appeal procedure.

4.6 Access to Records and Applications

The Admissions Office and the Registration Office will have access to all applications. The administrator in each Faculty will have access to all applications within their Faculty.

5. Documents Related to this Procedure

5.1 Policy

AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy

AQAE037 Access Transfer and Progression Policy.

AQAE067 Awards, Certification and Conferring Policy

5.2 Procedures

AQAE032 Procedure for Deferral of Modules and Programmes

AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal

5.3 Forms

AQAE041_002 Post Board Change Request Form.

AQAE072_001 Application to Exit with an Embedded Award Form

AQAE072_002 Application for an Award by Accumulation of Awards Form

5.4 Worksheet

WS010 Work sheet for Quality Office and Exams Processing of Exit awards

6. Measurement of Effectiveness of this Procedure

Not Applicable.

7. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	New Procedure	29 June 2026

Appendix 1 List of Embedded awards available to a continuing student under specific conditions approved by Academic Council

ATU Programme	ATU Embedded Programme	Parchment required by	Specific purpose / scheme	Additional conditions or comments
Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Agriculture and Environmental Management GA_SAGAG_H08	Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Environmental Management GA_SAGRG_B07	Department of Food Agriculture and the Marine/ Teagasc	Trained Farmer Status	Galway Campus
Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Rural Enterprise and Agri Business GA_BRUAG_H08	Bachelor of Business in Rural Enterprise and Agri Business GA_BRUAG_B07	Department of Food Agriculture and the Marine/ Teagasc	Trained Farmer Status	Galway Campus
Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Agri-Business Management GA_BAGMG_H08	Bachelor of Business in Agri-Business Management GA_BAGMG_B07	Department of Food Agriculture and the Marine/ Teagasc	Trained Farmer Status	Galway Campus
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agriculture (Common Entry) incorporating degree award options Animal and Crop Science / Environmental Management LY_SAGCE_B	Higher Certificate in Science in Agriculture LY_SAGRI_C	Department of Food Agriculture and the Marine/ Teagasc	Trained Farmer Status	Donegal Campus
Bachelor of Science in Agriculture with Animal and Crop Science LY_SAGRI_D	Higher Certificate in Science in Agriculture LY_SAGRI_C	Department of Food Agriculture and the Marine/ Teagasc	Trained Farmer Status	Donegal Campus
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care GA_SECHC_H08	Higher Certificate in Arts in Early Childhood Education and Care GA_SECHC_C06	Department of Children, Disability and Equality	TUSLA requirement for employment in Early Childhood	Mayo Campus

ATU Programme	ATU Embedded Programme	Parchment required by	Specific purpose / scheme	Additional conditions or comments
Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Early Childhood Care, Health and Education LY_VECCE_B	Higher Certificate in Early Childhood Care, Health and Education LY_VECCE_C	Department of Children, Disability and Equality	TUSLA requirement for employment in Early Childhood	Donegal Campus
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