



Trinity College Dublin

The University of Dublin

MEABHRÁN | MEMORANDUM

To: University Council

From: Dean of Graduate Studies

Date: 4th February 2026

Subject: Postgraduate Certificate Exit Award

In Spring 2025, the Graduate Studies Committee (GS/24-25/118) and Council (CL/24-25/193.1) approved, in principle, a proposal to explore the introduction of a “general” Postgraduate Certificate as an exit award to be offered to students who do not successfully complete their Masters or Postgraduate Diploma, but who have completed between 30 and 55 ECTS credits.

A General Postgraduate Certificate Exit award would be available for a) programmes without a parallel framework structure and b) when a student exiting does not meet Programme Learning Outcomes specified for named Postgraduate Certificate award in the framework structure.

This exit award would constitute a Minor award, aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications Level 9, the practices of IUA universities, and Trinity’s own academic regulations.

Decision: Council is asked to note and approve the proposed titles (listed in Table 1) and regulations pertaining to the proposed general Postgraduate Certificate exit award.



General Postgraduate Certificate exit award Proposal

1. Overview

Students who complete between 30ECTS and 55ECTS taught credit volume of their Masters or Postgraduate Diploma course will be eligible to exit with a minor award of general Postgraduate Certificate (30ECTS) named after the name of their respective School.

Based within the Exit Award Framework for PGT Programmes with some compatible modifications, this new award would be a general exit one from any direct entry Postgraduate Diploma and Masters parent courses within a School irrespective of discipline.

Table 1: Postgraduate Certificate Titles

School	Title
Dental Sciences	Postgraduate Certificate in Dental Sciences Studies
Medicine	Postgraduate Certificate in Health-Related Science Studies
Nursing and Midwifery	Postgraduate Certificate in Health Studies
Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences	Postgraduate Certificate in Pharmaceutical Studies
Business	Postgraduate Certificate in Business Studies
Creative Arts	Postgraduate Certificate in Creative Arts Studies
Education	Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Studies
English	Postgraduate Certificate in English Studies
Histories and Humanities	Postgraduate Certificate in Histories and Humanities Studies
Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies	Postgraduate Certificate in Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Law	Postgraduate Certificate in Law Studies
Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences	Postgraduate Certificate in Linguistic, Speech and Communication Studies
Psychology	Postgraduate Certificate in Behavioural Studies
Religion, Theology and Peace Studies	Postgraduate Certificate in Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Social Science and Philosophy	Postgraduate Certificate in Social Sciences and Philosophy
Social Work & Social Policy	Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies
Biochemistry & Immunology	Postgraduate Certificate in Biochemistry & Immunology Studies
Chemistry	Postgraduate Certificate in Chemical Sciences Studies ¹
Computer Science and Statistics	Postgraduate Certificate in Computer Science Studies Postgraduate Certificate in Statistics Studies
Engineering	Postgraduate Certificate in Engineering Studies
Genetics & Microbiology	Postgraduate Certificate in Genetics & Microbiology Studies ¹
Maths	Postgraduate Certificate in Pure and Applied Mathematics
Natural Sciences	Postgraduate Certificate in Natural Sciences Studies
Physics	Postgraduate Certificate in Physics Studies

¹ School currently does not offer postgraduate taught programmes, but this title would be used for any future proposal School may develop.



2. Postgraduate Certificate Regulations

All Masters programmes have the option of an exit Postgraduate Certificate (P.Grad.Cert). The P.Grad. Cert exit award can be:

- General (As described in *Section III, GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR TAUGHT GRADUATE PROGRAMMES, General §9*)
- Named (Available for programmes with framework structure. Such programmes are, for completeness, listed under the appropriate Faculty entry)

In Trinity, the General Postgraduate Certificate exit award:

- i) Is a general exit award from any direct entry Postgraduate Diploma and Masters parent course within a School.
- ii) Is a Minor award at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- iii) Is weighted at 30 ECTS. A transcript with all completed ECTS will be provided to students.
- iv) Is ungraded and unclassified.
- v) Has no point of entry separate to its parent programme, i.e., students apply for entry to the appropriate direct entry programme.
- vi) Is taken as reflecting part-fulfilment of some of the Programme Learning Outcomes of the parent course leading to a Major award².
- vii) Does not have a title reflecting that of its parent programme from which the student is exiting with that award, but one overarching title pre-agreed with each School as applicable to all the School's multiple disciplines (see Table 1 for a list of titles) and multiple programmes.
- viii) Is available to students upon exiting from the parent programme as a result of either voluntary withdrawal from the programme, failure to complete the full 60 ECTS taught component of the programme or failure to achieve the Learning Outcomes associated with any framework-based named Postgraduate Certificate.
- ix) Is awarded on condition that the student has passed between a minimum of 30 ECTS and maximum 55 ECTS taught credits of the registered direct entry course of study (as will be reflected in the student's transcript), but its credit volume is fixed at 30 ECTS.
- x) Uses rules for compensation operating on the parent course in calculating the overall taught credits. At least 30ECTS must be completed without counting in the externally acquired credit volume brought into the course under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) admissions regulations.
- xi) Is recommended by the Court of Examiners of the parent course: the Court of Examiners will consider an advance submission from the Course Director to recommend a student/s who has achieved between 30ECTS and 55ECTS credits to be awarded a general Postgraduate Certificate Exit award.
- xii) In the event where the student's direct entry course runs in parallel with a framework-based programme, the student who exits with 30ECTS to 55ECTS completed taught credits on their registered course will be eligible to exit with a Minor named award of Postgraduate Certificate pertaining to the corresponding framework-based Postgraduate Certificate course subject to satisfying its Programme Learning Outcomes specified for that named Postgraduate Certificate award. Students who do not fulfil that condition will exit with general Postgraduate Certificate (as per Table 1).
- xiii) Fee refunds or credit for further studies will not be offered to students exiting with a general Postgraduate Certificate from their Masters/ Postgraduate Diploma course.

² At least one PLO of the Major Postgraduate Diploma or Masters award has been met on at least one sub-strand related to "Knowledge" or "Competence" as stipulated by QQI for granting a Minor award.



- xiv) Students recommended for or in receipt of the general Postgraduate Certificate exit award do not have an automatic right of subsequent re-entry into the exited course or transfer to another course at the university without reapplication for a new admission to a course of choice; an admissions decision will be determined on a competitive basis against new applicants. This is to differentiate the general Postgraduate Certificate exit award from the attainment Postgraduate Certificate award on the Framework structure thereby preventing an automatic right of readmission.
- xv) Should the graduate with a general Postgraduate Certificate wish to return in the future years to complete the Masters /Postgraduate Diploma course they originally studied, the rules of RPL policy will apply. Rescinding of award: Once the graduate on the readmitted course completes it successfully, the general Postgraduate Certificate must be rescinded to the Registrar before a new higher award can be bestowed. Fees: The graduate will be liable for full charges and fees of the readmission course.
- xvi) Should the original course have ceased in the meantime, the graduate might be advised to consider the nearest similar course for admission, and the rules of RPL policy will apply to that replacement course.
- xvii) Should the graduate with a general Postgraduate Certificate wish to return in the future years to complete any other course in Trinity, the rules of RPL policy may also apply, if appropriate. Rescinding of award: The general Postgraduate Certificate does not need to be rescinded in these instances. Fees: The graduate will be liable for full charges and fees of the readmission course.

Additional/clarification of regulations of Named Postgraduate Certificate:

- xviii) Should the graduate with a named Postgraduate Certificate award wish to return in the future years to complete their Masters or Postgraduate Diploma course they originally studied, they would be eligible to return onto the course via the framework structure only. They would not be required to re-apply for the course together with new applicants, but should submit a request for readmission (stating the grounds) to the Dean of Graduate Studies via the School / Director of Postgraduate Teaching & Learning. If graduates of a named Postgraduate Certificate completed more than 30ECTS, the Course Director will determine the amount of the taught credit volume to transfer onto the resumed course. Rescinding of award: Once the graduate on the readmitted course completes it successfully, the named Postgraduate Certificate must be rescinded to the Registrar before a new higher award can be bestowed. Fees: The graduate will be liable for full charges and fees of the readmission course.
- xix) Should the graduate with a general Postgraduate Certificate or a named Postgraduate Certificate exit award wish to apply to a course different to the one they exited from, they will not need to rescind that award if they use modules passed as RPL for a different course in College (subject to limits outlined in RPL policy for pre and post admissions). Fees: The graduate will be liable for full charges and fees of the readmission course.

3. Operational notes

Return of results and graduation process for general Postgraduate Certificate will align with existing processes, namely the AR Graduation Team will collect its marks, and information the same way as on all other named postgraduate certificate and postgraduate diploma awards.

AR, upon receipt of excel sheet information from the Court of Examiners, will complete necessary actions on SITS to ensure that student has correct intended award (i.e. general PG Cert and not Masters).

Progression / SITS codes to be used – to be confirmed by AR.

The AR Graduation Team will schedule Graduations centrally and will centrally issue parchments for graduates to receive at respective graduation ceremonies.



Appendix 1. Learning Outcomes of general Postgraduate Certificate

According to QQI policy on programme learning outcomes pertaining to Minor Award at NFQ 9:

- i) the proposed General Postgraduate Certificate exit award can be considered Minor as it is always linked to a course leading to a Major award (PgDip/Masters) and could be taken as reflecting part-fulfilment of some of the programme learning outcomes of that award.
- ii) QQI's [Descriptors for Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental Award-Types](#) (specific reference on page 2 and 3) are not prescriptive but flexible for the full range of possibility of programme size/ volume available, and outline that the level of alignment to the award descriptor (breath, knowledge, competency) does not have to be as strong compared to a Postgraduate Diploma or Master as the volume of workload is less (30 ECTS vs 60/90 ECTS). There is no requirement in the existing policies and criteria that all level descriptors should be written on the same basis.
- iii) In relation to the NFQ Level 9 indicators, the QQI document acknowledges that Minor awards may often specify standards for fewer than the eight sub-strands (knowledge: breath, kind, range, selectivity; competence: context, role, learning to learn, insight). In some cases, their focus may be narrow and only a small number of sub-strands may be defined. If only one sub-strand is defined for the award, then the level to which the award-type is allocated is decided on the basis of that strand.
- iv) The Awarding Bodies may develop its own approach about what is the smallest part of a major award that is to be recognised as being a minor award. It is acknowledged therefore that constituent parts of a major award may be recognised as a minor award. Thus, awarding bodies may use minor awards and credit as distinct tools to recognise student learning.

As mandated by the Exit Award Framework for PGT Programmes each Masters course has an exit Postgraduate Diploma award linked to its Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO). Completed taught credits can therefore be mapped directly to the PLOs of the “parent” Postgraduate Diploma/Masters course and there is no need to specifically identify a set of level descriptors for this new Minor general Postgraduate Certificate exit award which is taken as derivative from the existing parameters of Major award of taught Postgraduate Diploma PLOs and its level descriptors present in Calendar III Level Descriptors for Major Awards (p.25) POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMAS (LEVEL 9, NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS).

As the general Postgraduate Certificate exit award will always have the minimum taught credit volume of 30 ECTS which may be obtained by completing modules (each worth 5 ECTS or 10 ECTS) in configuration of 6 modules x 5 ECTS or 3 modules x 10 ECTS or a blend of both. Therefore, the likelihood is 100% that the required minimum taught credit volume of 30 ECTS also ensures that the student has achieved at least one PLO of the Major Postgraduate Diploma award and has met at least one sub-strand related to “Knowledge” or “Competence” as stipulated by QQI for granting a Minor award.

Conclusion: There is therefore no need for a new section in Calendar III for Level Descriptors for Minor Awards for POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATES (LEVEL 9, NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS); instead, a broad clarification/sub-section should be inserted covering general Postgraduate Certificate exit award on page 47 in SECTION III GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR TAUGHT GRADUATE PROGRAMMES or page 50 SECTION III ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESSION REGULATIONS. Proposed Calendar Entry can be found in Appendix 2.



Appendix 2. Calendar Part III Entry

Section III, GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR TAUGHT GRADUATE PROGRAMMES, General

5. Students who have opted to receive or exited³ with a named P.Grad.Cert. may apply to submit subsequently for the corresponding P.Grad.Dip. and/or Masters degree. For students who exited with a named P. Grad. Cert. the Course Director determines the amount of the taught credit volume to transfer onto the resumed course. Following completion of the P.Grad.Dip. or Masters requirements the student will inform the Registrar of their intention to rescind the P.Grad. Cert. and have the credit obtained during the P.Grad.Cert. integrated into the P.Grad.Dip. or Masters degree. The student will be required to submit the original P.Grad.Cert. and/or any duplicates that have been issued. The time limit for completion of all possible credits of the framework pathway (P.Grad.Cert to Masters) will normally be 8 years from the date of initial registration for the pathway. In exceptional circumstances, a longer time limit may be considered by the Dean of Graduate Studies. This arrangement is not available to those students who exit with a P.Grad.Dip. as a consequence of failing to attain the pass requirements of the Masters degree.

8. All Masters programmes have the option of an exit Postgraduate Certificate (P.Grad.Cert). The Postgraduate Certificate exit award can be:

- General (As described in *Section III, GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR TAUGHT GRADUATE PROGRAMMES, General §9*)
- Named (Available for programmes with framework structure. Such programmes are, for completeness, listed under the appropriate Faculty entry)

9. A General P.Grad.Cert. exit award is available to students upon exiting from any direct entry P. Grad.Dip. or Masters as a result of either voluntary withdrawal from the programme or failure to complete the full 60 ECTS taught component of the programme. It is awarded on condition that the student has passed between a minimum of 30 ECTS and maximum of 55 ECTS credits associated with taught modules of the registered direct entry course of study.

In Trinity, the General P. Grad. Cert. exit award:

- i) Is a Minor award at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- ii) Is weighted at 30ECTS⁴.
- iii) Is ungraded and unclassified.
- iv) Has no point of entry separate to its parent programme, i.e., students apply for entry to the appropriate direct entry programme.
- v) Is taken as reflecting part-fulfilment of some of the Programme Learning Outcomes of the parent course leading to a Major award.⁵
- vi) Does not have a title reflecting that of its parent programme from which the student is exiting with that award, but one overarching title pre-agreed with each School.

The P.Grad.Cert. exit award uses rules for compensation operating on the parent course. At least 30ECTS must be completed without counting in the credit volume brought into the course under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) admissions regulations.

³ See details on P.Grad.Cert regulations under General Regulations §9.

⁴ Certificate value is 30ECTS, a transcript will reflect full details of ECTS completed.

⁵ At least one PLO of the Major Postgraduate Diploma or Masters award has been met on at least one sub-strand related to "Knowledge" or "Competence" as stipulated by QQI for granting a Minor award.



Award of a General P.Grad.Cert.-is recommended by the Court of Examiners of the parent course. Where a framework-based programme runs in parallel, students may exit with a named P.Grad.Cert. if the associated learning outcomes are met; otherwise, they may be eligible the General P.Grad.Cert. award.

Fee refunds or credit for further studies will not be offered to students exiting with the General P.Grad.Cert. from their Masters/ P.Grad. Dip. course.

Students in receipt of the General P.Grad.Cert. exit award have no automatic right to re-enter the exited course or transfer to another course; they must reapply and compete with new applicants:

- (i) For General P.Grad.Cert. award holders returning to their original Masters/ Postgraduate Diploma course the RPL policy applies. The Postgraduate certificate must be rescinded before a higher award is conferred.
- (ii) For General P.Grad.Cert. award holders entering a different course the rules of RPL may apply and the rescinding of the General P.Grad.Cert. is not required.
- (iii) If the original course has ceased, admission to a similar course may be advised and RPL may apply.

Fees: in all scenarios, the graduate will be liable for full charges and fees of the readmission course.