

Section 17 Independent Learning Units: policy and procedure

17.1 Types of Independent Learning Units (ILUs)

There are 2 types of Independent Learning Unit:

- 17.1.1 **Validated ILUs:** These are ILUs which are validated as part of a programme of study and are specified as such in the approved programme specification. They are coded and treated like any other module, but the precise content, learning method, and assessment strategy are negotiated individually between students and staff.
- 17.1.2 **Special ILUs:** These ILUs have not been validated as part of a programme of study; rather they are modules which have been negotiated by the student and staff concerned on an ad hoc basis to replace an existing module in the programme of study at the student's request.

17.2 Special ILUs

- 17.2.1 Special ILUs must be agreed in advance of the semester the ILU is to be taken in and may not normally replace a module on which the student has already been enrolled onto. In the rare circumstances, for example, where a student returns early from an international placement, an ILU may replace a module on which the student has been enrolled where the University accepts that the original assessment cannot be implemented.
- 17.2.2 In the event that an ILU replaces the reassessment for a previous failed module, this will be considered a second attempt and the final maximum module mark available for the ILU is a capped pass.
- 17.2.3 The number of special ILUs that a student will be permitted to take will not normally exceed the equivalent of 20 credits in any 1 semester and 40 credits within the overall programme of study (Internships counting as an ILU – see [section 17.6](#) below).
- 17.2.4 A 20 credit ILU is to be undertaken over the period of one semester. A 40 credit ILU is to be undertaken over the period of two semesters.

17.3 Guidelines for writing an ILU proposal

- 17.3.1 For **validated ILUs**, a distinction should be drawn between the approval of an ILU module as an element of the programme as a whole, and approval of the individual student's arrangements for this ILU. For the former, the normal validation procedures apply. At the level of the individual student, the standard ILU proposal form must be used.
- 17.3.2 The standard ILU proposal form must be used for both validated ILUs and special ILUs.

17.4 Procedures for submission of an ILU for approval

General

- 17.4.1 The following principles apply to all ILU proposals:
- Any ILU proposal is a matter for discussion between the student and the relevant Module Director/Tutor and/or Head of School or nominated representative.
 - Any ILU must be approved **no later than the last week of the preceding semester** in which it will be taken.
 - Approval for an ILU must be given by **either** the relevant Head of School **or** the School Quality Panel (SQP), taking into consideration any resource implications.
 - The approved ILU proposal form constitutes a legal document in terms of a student's programme of study, and as such the School must keep a copy of all approved ILUs and send a signed approved copy to the Assessment team in Registry who will upload this to the student's record.
 - The School must record details of all ILUs that are approved in the School Quality Panel minutes action log.

- f) In addition, the following approval procedures apply either to Validated ILUs or to Special ILUs.

Validated ILUs

- 17.4.2 The student's individual ILU is proposed within the context of the approved ILU module for which the student will have enrolled at the beginning of the academic year.
- 17.4.3 The School approves the individual ILU and informs the student when approval is granted and includes a copy of the approved proposal in the correspondence to the student.
- 17.4.4 Approval for a validated ILU is provided by the Module Director/Tutor. SQP and Head of School approval is not required for validated ILUs.

Special ILUs

- 17.4.5 The School recommends a special ILU to **either** the Head of School **or** the SQP for approval. Approval is not normally withheld if:
- The proposal is in the standard format and includes an unambiguous statement on the assessment strategies.
 - The proposal was received before the start of the semester in which it will be undertaken.
 - The overall programme does not contain more than 40 credits of ILU (internship counting as ILU).
 - For undergraduate programmes: the programme does not normally include more than 20 credits of ILU in any semester.
 - For postgraduate programmes: the programme does not normally include more than 30 credits of ILU in any semester.
 - The inclusion of the ILU does not lead to a non-standard overall programme structure.
- 17.4.6 For Scheme A students – The School must clearly indicate on the ILU form if the Special ILU mark is deemed compensatable or non-compensatable, while noting that the status of the mark will mirror the status of the standard assessment and should normally be compensatable.
- 17.4.7 Once approved by **either** the Head of School **or** the SQP, the School must write to the student confirming that approval has been granted and including a copy of the approved proposal with the correspondence to the student. A scanned copy of the signed 'Special ILU' form must be sent by email to the Assessment team in Registry who will update the student's record.

17.5 Guidelines

- 17.5.1 Choosing an ILU module as part of an individual programme of study involves a student and Module Director/Tutor negotiating the key aspects of the learning process and agreeing them in the form of a learning contract. The content of the learning contract reflects the requirements specified for all modules and should be of a comparable standard when presented for approval. Sufficient time for the negotiation and preparation of an ILU proposal should be allowed.
- 17.5.2 Preparing a proposal provides an opportunity for students and Module Directors/Tutors to articulate what they want to learn (aims and outcomes), how they will learn it (strategies and resources), and how they will know what they have learned (review and evaluation).
- 17.5.3 Group proposals are valid and provide valuable learning opportunities. Module Directors/Tutors should assure themselves that the assessment strategy is equitable to all participants and tests learning at the appropriate level.

17.6 Internships

- 17.6.1 Internships are similar to ILUs but differ in being attachments with organisations. The work undertaken is related to the student's subject of study. Internships are not placements or sandwich courses. An Internship constitutes a learning experience that attracts credits. Internships should be developed following the same principles and using the same proposal form. They are the equivalent of a 20-credit module.