

Section 12 Independent Learning Units: policy and procedure

12.1 Types of Independent Learning Units (ILUs)

There are 2 types of Independent Learning Unit:

- 12.1.1 **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.
- 12.1.2 **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.

12.2 Special ILUs

- 12.2.1 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.
- 12.2.2 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.
- 12.2.3 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 – refer to [section 12.5](#) below).
- 12.2.4 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.

12.3 Procedures for submission of an ILU for approval

General

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

- 12.3.2 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.
- 12.3.3 Where there are programme specific arrangements for ILUs approved to permit a programme transfer to an exit programme, refer to the programme specification.
- 12.3.4 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.

Special ILUs

- 12.3.5 The School recommends a special ILU to **either** the Head/Dean of School **or** the SQP for approval. Approval is not normally withheld if:
 - a) The proposal is in the standard format and includes an unambiguous statement on the assessment strategies.
 - b) The proposal was received before the start of the semester in which it will be undertaken.
 - c) The overall programme does not contain more than the maximum number of ILU credits per semester or programme as stated in **section 12.2**.
 - d) The inclusion of the ILU does not lead to a non-standard overall programme structure.
- 12.3.6 The School must clearly indicate on the ILU form if the Special ILU mark is deemed compensable or non-compensable, while noting that the status of the mark will mirror the status of the standard assessment and should normally be compensable.
- 12.3.7 Once approved by **either** the Head/Dean 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.

12.4 Guidelines

- 12.4.1 Choosing an ILU module as part of an individual programme of study involves a student and Module Director/Lead 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.
- 12.4.2 Preparing a proposal provides an opportunity for students and Module Directors/Leads 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).
- 12.4.3 Group proposals are valid and provide valuable learning opportunities. Module Directors/Leads should assure themselves that the assessment strategy is equitable to all participants and tests learning at the appropriate level.
- 12.4.4 An ILU cannot be used to replace a module repeated on a part time basis to redeem progression failure, unless there is teaching associated with this. It may be permissible in particular circumstances, for example, where a module is no longer running and the level's programme learning outcomes could be met by a student attending teaching for a module delivered at another level, provided they complete the ILU assessment at the level required to redeem progression failure.

12.5 Internships

- 12.5.1 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.