

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Dashboard / My courses / RPL2023

<p>Getting started</p>  <p>Getting Started New Activity</p>	<p>Week 1</p>  <p>SETTING THE SCENE New Activity</p>	<p>Week 2</p>  <p>RPL Enabling Success</p>	<p>Week 3</p>  <p>EUROPEAN CONTEXT</p>
<p>Week 4</p>  <p>CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS</p>	<p>Week 5</p>  <p>POLICIES</p>	<p>Week 6</p>  <p>IRISH CONTEXT</p>	<p>Claiming your badge</p>  <p>CLAIMING YOUR BADGE</p>

Robert Hickey ePortfolio



PPL

Recognition of
Prior Learning

Your Learning Counts



RECOGNITION OF
PRIOR LEARNING

Contents

Reflections Week 1	1
Peer Triad Week 1 Activity.....	1
Triad Contract.....	2
Week 1 Webinar Setting the Scene	2
My Informal Learning	3
Lisbon recognition convention/Global recognition convention	3
RPL for me	4
Top Resources for RPL	4
Reflections Week 2.....	5
The origins of the pass grade (40%)	5
Peer Triad Week 2 Activity.....	5
Triad Discussion on RPL	6
Week 2 Webinar RPL Enabling Success	7
Carbery Greener Dairy Farmer Project/Case study	7
The 4 stages of validation.....	8
How to approach this process	8
Donegal ETB's RPL Provision	9
Portfolio of Evidence.....	11
Reflections Week 3	12
In-class activity and follow on Triad weekly activity.	12
Week 3 Webinar European Context.....	13
RPL International Network	14
Output from RPL Network. Benefit for the institutions.	15
Challenges for access to higher education	16
The RPL Practitioner Network (Ireland)	16
Reflections Week 4	17

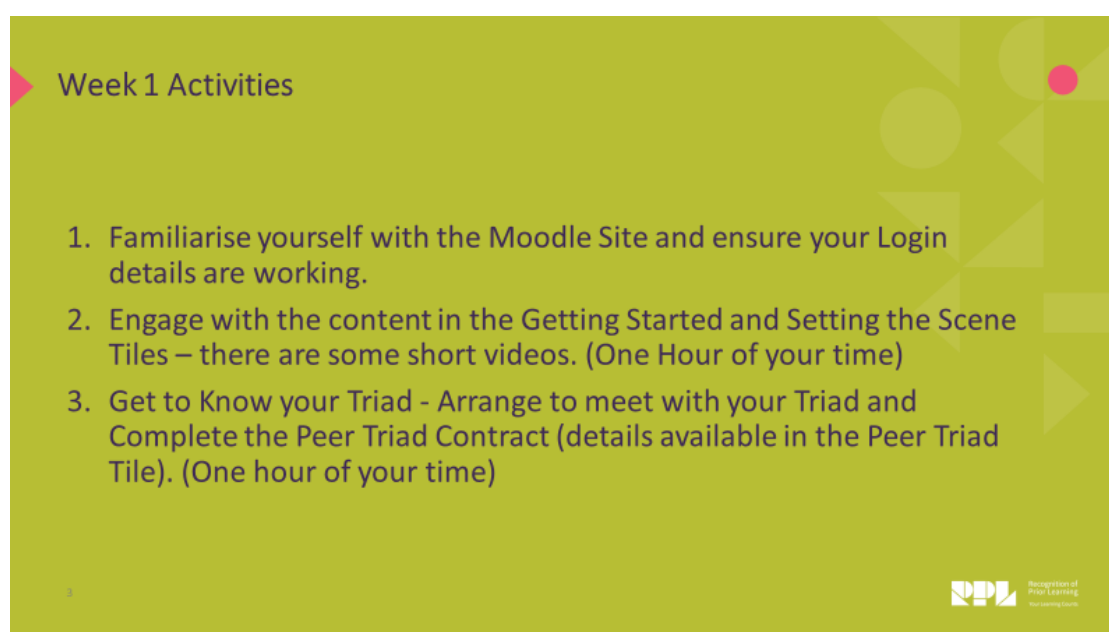
Professional Development Activity Robert Hickey	18
Week 4 Webinar Conceptual Frameworks	19
RPL Theoretic Frameworks	19
RPL Assumptions	19
Formal/Non-formal/Informal Learning Defined	20
Webinar 4 breakout room activity.....	20
What is Learning and how to Recognise it?	21
Reflections Week 5	25
TU Dublin RPL Policy	25
Week 5 Webinar Policies	26
RPL QQI policy discussion.	26
RPL Challenge and Definition	27
Pathway to policy	28
Webinar 5 breakout room activity.....	28
Policy Supports.....	29
Reflections Week 6	31
Week 6 Webinar the Irish Context.....	31
Digital Badge Criteria.....	31
National update for RPL Project	32
Week 6 Triad Activity	33
Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Development (module Learning Outcomes)	33
Reflection	34
Module/Programme Learning Outcomes (what's the difference).....	34

Reflections Week 1

My initial thoughts before starting this badge on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) from reading around is that it is a complex process and certainly not a one size fits all solution. It looks like QQI have fobbed off the responsibility of issuing awards/qualifications onto the institutions, with the latest recommendation solidifying this ([European Commission](#), 2022). What's new, with government organisations looking to subcontract out everything. I feel this will create barriers for accessing and availing of RPL in some cases. Each institution seems to have their own RPL police and procedures which is fine if someone is just looking for exemptions for a specific module but then every module is unique even when they have the same titles.


I am curious to find out if the alignment of Learning Outcomes (LO) must be identical for validation of RPL. If RPL and validation is simply a question of have you completed our exact module/learning/programme and if not, then good luck and on your bike, I will be disappointed. We need to remember that if a student gets let's say 50% in a module, then we can assume that they have achieved 50% of the LO, but they still get a qualification. So, for RPL will we still have to prove that all learning outcomes have been achieved i.e., a score of 100%?

Peer Triad Week 1 Activity



Week 1 Activities

1. Familiarise yourself with the Moodle Site and ensure your Login details are working.
2. Engage with the content in the Getting Started and Setting the Scene Tiles – there are some short videos. (One Hour of your time)
3. Get to Know your Triad - Arrange to meet with your Triad and Complete the Peer Triad Contract (details available in the Peer Triad Tile). (One hour of your time)

 Recognition of Prior Learning
The Learning Centre

Triad Contract



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Triad Ground Rules



Triad Member names (Aisling, Robbie, Mary)

These are the terms of group conduct and cooperation that we agreed on as a triad group.

Communication: We agreed to forms of communication within the group as follows -

- MS Teams - for live discussions
- Google Docs - for sharing written content & some discussions
- Email - for more immediate contact

Figure 1 Google Doc Set up in Week 1 for Triad Contract

Week 1 Webinar Setting the Scene

What kind of learning is recognised?

- **Prior Formal**
 - Learning which is on a framework of qualifications and has earned ECTS credits or equivalent. NAIRC as supported by QQI provides a comparison website for higher education qualification classifications
<https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions>
- **Experiential (prior informal and non-formal learning)**
 - Informal – unplanned learning acquired through day to day, home or work activities.
 - Non-formal – structure learning which has identified outcomes or purpose but is not credit earning on the NFAQ e.g. in-house company training

What do you understand by RPL.

Sounds good on paper. In practice is it as good?

I first heard about RPL in 2006 and thought it was an amazing opportunity for people who had lots of real-life experience but have not had the opportunity to study formally in the area they have worked.

My Informal Learning

1. Attending conferences.
2. Presenting at conferences.
3. Working on projects.
4. Writing journal papers.
5. Writing chapters in books.
6. Teaching a wide variety of modules.
7. Running workshops.
8. Undertaking short courses (digital badges etc).

Can you think of some learning from your professional practice which would be considered informal or non-formal?

Lisbon recognition convention/Global recognition convention



RPL for me



In your context what is/are the most important word(s) ?

1. Informal Learning
2. validation and
3. accreditation.

Top Resources for RPL

RPL in Europe

EU Validation Video

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1146&langId=en&videoId=2876&furtherVideos=yes>

Cedefop <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

European guidelines for Validating Informal and Non-formal learning

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073_en.pdf

RPL in Ireland

- National strategy for HE to 2030
<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf>
- National Skills Strategy
https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf
- Human Capital Initiative Fund – Pillar 3 [Human Capital Initiative | Skills and Engagement | Higher Education Authority \(hea.ie\)](#)

Difficult to cultivate a culture of RPL and all its facets across campus.

Reflections Week 2

Trouble connecting with other Triad members. After sending out a sample Triad Contract nearly 2 weeks ago I emailed both members to clarify if they were planning on taking part in the course. One member replied and has started to engage. The other member will be replaced tomorrow if not heard from as stated during the week 1 webinar.

Contacted Clare Walsh to arrange a new member for our Triad. Clare introduced us via email to our new member today Thursday 27th April 2023. I have updated and shared the Google Docs for our Triad contract and week 2 Triad discussion with our new member Mary Matthews from DKIT. Delighted the Triad is now complete.

The origins of the pass grade (40%)

I am interested in finding out where this 40% threshold originated and what it is based on. After some interesting discussions during week 2 webinar on achieving accreditation or exemption from a module or course without achieving all the learning outcomes. A common response to seeking exemption or RPL leading to certification would be that an applicant has not achieved all the LO for the module or programme. However, students who complete a course [rarely achieve](#) 100% in every module. Far from it I imagine, although will probably be required to show proof of achieving all LO if exemption or accreditation is applied for through RPL.

I love the phrasing “Using RPL as an assessment tool” which is being used in [Donegal ETBs](#) as presented by Siobhan Murray during week 2 webinar. Either we should use the same grading system rational for RPL as we use for an individual module or programme, or we should develop RPL as a holistic method of assessment for all. It seems to me that RPL is more rigorous than the current assessment of many programmes.

Peer Triad Week 2 Activity

No contribution to the week 2 activity in the Google doc from Mary. Aisling and I populated the discussion table the day after I set it up. Met with Mary on Thursday 9.30 for discussion. No sign of Aisling (but it was supposed to be a break for the week).

Activities for Week 2

Engage with the Content in the Tile Enabling Success.

Discussion Point for your Peer Triad:

In terms of the rationale for RPL, what are some of the arguments that may be made in favour and against the use of RPL? Consider these from the perspective of; (1) the education provider/institution; (2) the staff (both teaching /academic and administrative); (3) potential applicant and/or student.

Triad Discussion on RPL

RPL week 2 Triad activity				
Discussion Point for your Peer Triad: <i>In terms of the rationale for RPL, what are some of the arguments that may be made in favour and against the use of RPL? Consider these from the perspective of; (1) the education provider/institution; (2) the staff (both teaching /academic and administrative); (3) potential applicant and/or student.</i>				
		Robbie	Aishling	John
1) The educational provider/institution	For	Attract new students. Get students with real life experience onto a <u>programme</u> . Enrich the diversity of the cohort on a <u>programme</u> . Links to authentic assessment. A show of flexibility and openness from the institution. A progressive method of education and assessment. Links to industry and the workplace. Skills grounded in the real world.	A vibrant and diverse student population Supports access agenda and lifelong learning Meets societal needs - <u>upskilling</u> and <u>reskilling</u>	
	Against	Belittle the academic work carried out by students and staff. A perception of reduced quality assurance. May interfere with the business model (bums on seats in first year) or may bypass attending	Resource intensive Academically challenging to <u>standrise</u> QA challenges to ensure transparency and fairness	

Figure 2 Google Doc set up in Week 2 for Discussion on Rational for RPL from different perspectives.

Week 2 Webinar RPL Enabling Success

Carbery Greener Dairy Farmer Project/Case study

A Cohort Approach



Each member of the Carbery Greener Dairy Farmer Project

- Have completed the same training provided by Carbery Group and Teagasc
- Attended same seminars and workshops
- Taken part in same initiatives such as
 - Tree Planting
 - Water
 - Habitat Surveying
 - Soil Testing

39



Feedback from the farmers

That the opportunity to study and have their prior knowledge rewarded was magnificent and that this allowed them to study at 3rd level was amazing benefit to receive.

Opened their mind to the bigger picture and areas they did not know about.


Look at environment not just locally now but nationally and globally.

Important to understand who and what the information is and whether it's reliable information.

More focused on impact they can have. One joined the tidy town committee. One involved in local pollination project.

Gave them confidence to consider further study. Better role model for their family.

The 4 stages of validation



2.1. The four phases of validation

The above definition does not limit validation to a particular institutional context. While it is most commonly found within education and training, making it possible for individuals to acquire a formal qualification on the basis of non-formal and informal learning, validation is also carried out by several institutions and stakeholders outside education and training: labour market authorities, economic sectors, enterprises and voluntary organisations. The multiple outcomes of validation, ranging from formal qualifications to enterprise-internal proofs of acquired competences, are all united through their efforts to increase the visibility and value of the learning taking place outside classrooms. To clarify the basic features of validation, the recommendation identifies four distinct phases: identification; documentation; assessment; and certification.

- 'Identification of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- Documentation of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- Assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- Certification of the results of the assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate.' (Council of the EU, 2012, p. 3, points 2a to 2d).

How to approach this process

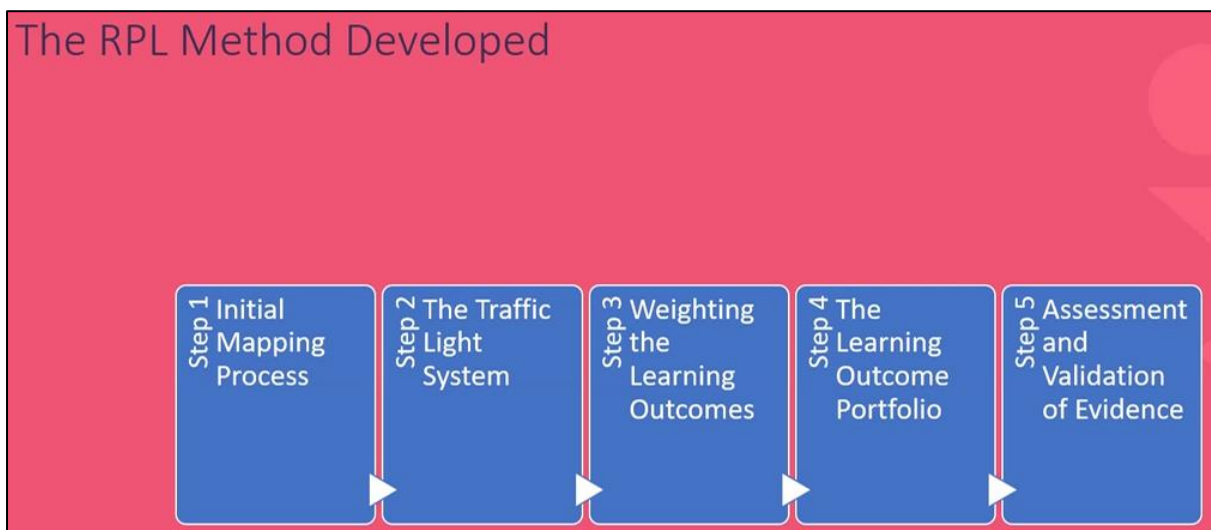
Observations

Documentation

Photographic proof

Interview/group discussion

Signed report from someone



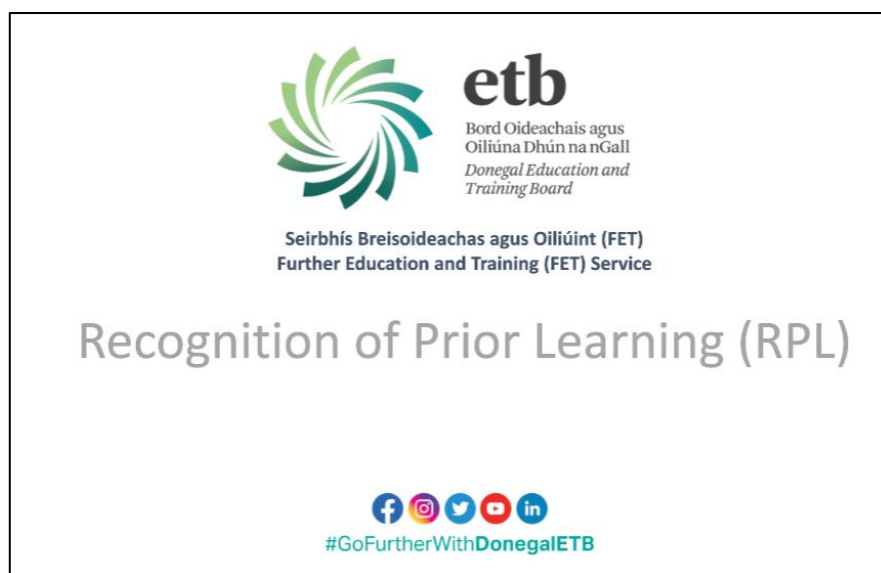
Spreadsheet with learning outcomes and a weighting applied to each learning outcome.

60% exemptions were given from the level 7 degree.

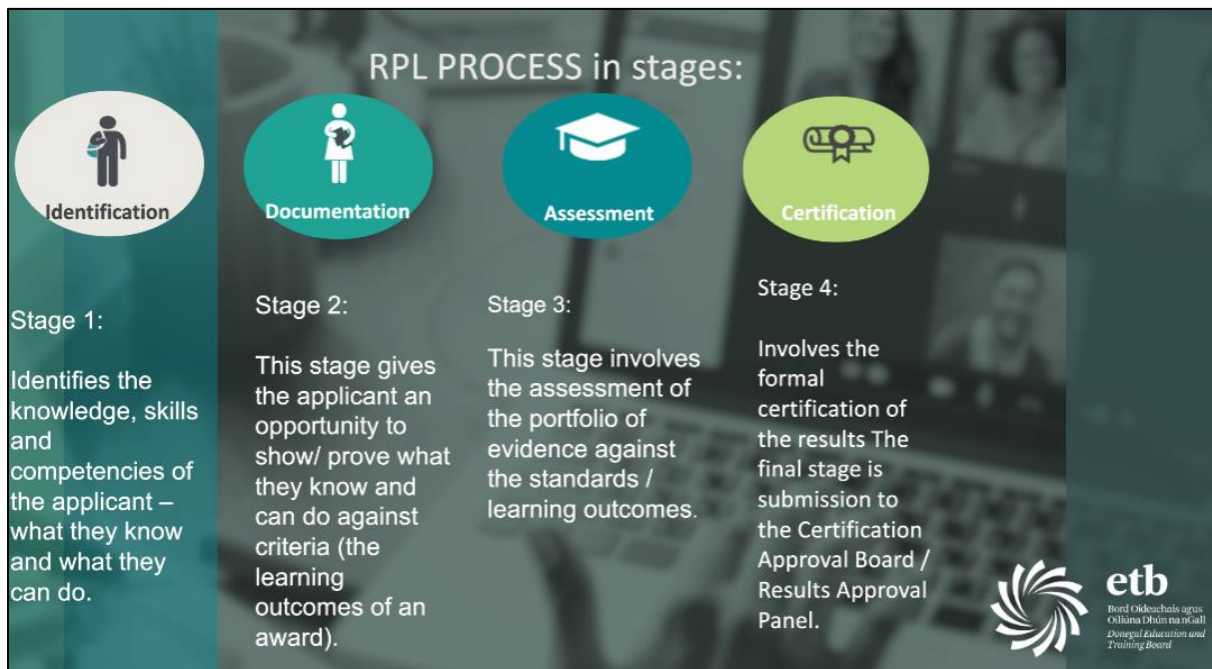
“A brilliant insight” (Ciara Staunton, 2023) webinar 2

Does this RPL process not highlight inadequacies and flaws in the assessment system being used where students can pass a module and graduate, having not achieved all of the LO for modules and potentially having not achieved the LO for the programmes? What’s the point in having a learning outcome if it does not have to be achieved? I wonder if this highlighting of the assessment flaws is the reason that RPL might not be a popular process in institutions of further and higher education? (Hickey 2023:-)

Donegal ETB's RPL Provision



RPL as an assessment tool. Awarding full certification through RPL. A portfolio guide/mentor provided to help the applicant.




Is RPL a measure of competency? As competency is the real measure of professionalism. I know lots of highly qualified people who are not competent.

What a brilliant and progressive initiative. Serving the people and cultivating a culture of learning and recognition. This is what all institutions of education should be doing!

College (Theory) RPL (In Practice) I think I would rather employ someone with RPL accreditation.

RPL SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT/ ASSESSOR

- Assess and grade each portfolio in a fair and consistent way by using:
 1. An assessment rubric to grade
 2. Ensuring that the applicant is given every possibility to have all evidenced graded
- Maintain records.
- Treat all portfolios in a confidential manner.
- Adhere to quality assurance guidelines, policies and procedures.


etb
 Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúnaíochtaí na n-Éireann
 Donegal Education and Training Board

obhanmurray

Portfolio of Evidence

- Current: the learning must have been achieved in the last five years and be up-to-date and relevant
- Reliable: the evidence provided by the learner must be reliable and authentic
- Sufficient: there must be sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of the relevant module have been achieved
- Valid: the evidence provided by the learner must match the academic level of the learning outcomes of the relevant module.

1. **Written/ verbal** response to the Assignment Brief
2. **Educational and Training Background**: Evidence of formal training certificates (if applicable).
3. **Work Experience**: This might include job descriptions, work samples, references, or other evidence of work experience.
4. **Continuing Professional Development**: This might include certificate attendance records, or other evidence of professional development activities.
5. **Personal Reflection**: Evidence of the learner's personal reflection on their learning and professional development. This might include statements or essays that reflect on their experiences and how they have developed their knowledge and skills.
6. **Competency-Based Evidence**: This might include work samples, portfolios, case studies, or other evidence that demonstrates the ability to apply their knowledge in practice.
7. Up to date CV and reference(s) if possible from current/ previous employer.

Reflections Week 3

Week 3 Agenda for the morning

9:45am Short introduction by Dr Christina Paulus, Head of Lifelong Learning

9:46 – 9:50 Barbara Birke with the RPL Network

9:50 – 10:30 presentation with discussion

10:30 – 10:45 Break-Out Room Discussion

10:45- 11am Final discussion and findings



In-class activity and follow on Triad weekly activity.

Week 3: Peer Triad Activity

Questions for Break Out Rooms and Peer Triads

How does your institution benefit from implementing RPL?

To what extent there are challenges for validation within the four phases- do they differ?

Do we need a common understanding of Quality Assurance for RPL

Digitalisation and RPL- challenges and solutions?

Would a Peer Review Network within Ireland helpful?

Christina Paulus, setting the seen and European context for RPL. First presenting the Charter on Lifelong Learning. Identifying common goals between Lifelong Learning and RPL.

Questions for Break Out Rooms and Peer Triads

How does your institution benefit from implementing RPL?

To what extent there are challenges for validation within the four phases- do they differ?

Do we need a common understanding of Quality Assurance for RPL

Digitalisation and RPL- challenges and solutions?

Would a Peer Review Network within Ireland helpful?

		Robbie	Aishling	Mary
1) How does your institution benefit from implementing RPL?		50% of our students are currently non-standard entries, so we have a diverse student population. This adds a richness to the university and its programs. However, it also brings a <u>unique set of challenges</u> . Lots of support is needed for non-standard students.		
2) To what extent there are challenges for		Everyone is confused. The lecturers, the admin staff, the students. Information is key. But also the skills to apply the		

Week 3 Webinar European Context



Context

European Universities CHARTER On Lifelong Learning


UNIVERSITIES COMMIT TO:

- Embedding concepts of **widening access** and lifelong learning in their institutional strategies
- **Providing education and learning to a diversified student population.**
- Adapting study programmes to ensure that they are designed **to widen participation** and attract returning adult learners
- **Recognising prior learning**
- Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of lifelong learning
- Consolidating reforms to promote a flexible and creative learning environment for all students
- Developing partnerships at local, regional, national and international level to provide attractive and relevant programmes

(Source: European Univ. Charter on LLL, Brüssel 2008)

RPL International Network

Looks like Austria has gone as far as changing the law to ensure RPL is available to its citizens, but only possible (not obligatory). I don't know if Ireland has such a law? But it sounds Irish alright, "possible but not obligatory". Another example of a lack of enforcement in Ireland maybe.




Networking in the context of RPL

RPL Network Austria &
European RPL Network

Barbara Birke – barbara.birke@aq.ac.at
Georg Winkler – georg.winkler@aq.ac.at

10.5.2023

 Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

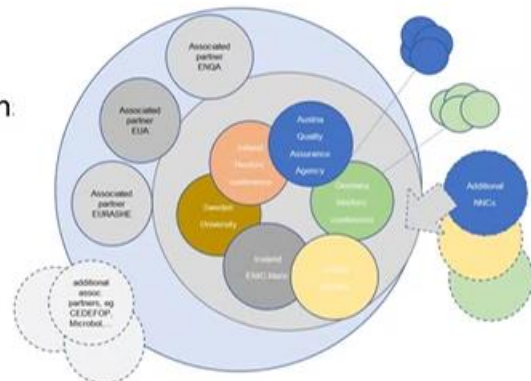
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

- In 2021, RPL has been enshrined in law in Austria.
 - » Recognition of competences acquired at higher education institutions (Lisbon Convention) is now mandatory
 - » The recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences by means of validation has been made possible (but is not obligatory). **Procedures for this must be laid down in the statutes.**

My question answered maybe? Ireland are part of the International RPL Network. Looks like another heavily funded European project. I suppose these things must start somewhere. These large projects remind me of the discussion between the treebeard and the [Ent's in the Lord of the Rings](#). Their language is so old it takes them a long time to say anything. It is not until their friends are killed (chopped down) that they actually make any decisions about choosing a side in the War.

Partnership/Network members

- National networks represented by co-ordinators/contact person
 - » AQ Austria (coordinator) – Quality assurance
 - » HRK (Germany), THEA (Ireland) – Rector’s conferences
 - » MZO (Croatia), RANNIS (Iceland),
 - » UHR (Sweden) – Ministry/subordinate departments
 - » GU (Sweden) – University
- (Representatives from) EU institution.
 - » EUA
 - » EURASHE
 - » ENQA
- National experts ad personam
 - » Susanna Boldrino, Christina Paulus -> HEIs Austria & RPL Network Austria



Output from RPL Network. Benefit for the institutions.

Higher education institutions

Higher education institutions can also benefit from a structured and systematic recognition of non-formal and informal learning as it:

- facilitates and broadens access to higher education for non-traditional students,
- can contribute to increased mobility and internationalisation of the higher education sector
- is important for the development of new forms of learning and flexible study paths
- can increase the quality of higher education with its focus on learning outcomes.



These are very similar to the output from our Triad week 2 discussion activity on the pros and cons of RPL from multiple perspectives.

Challenges for access to higher education

- The main challenge is understanding RPL procedures and requirements.

- Understanding RPL procedures and requirements is the main challenge (50% of responses).
- Attitudes within the academic community and lack of expertise are also significant challenges (50% and 46% of responses, respectively).

Again, the points highlighted here have also been identified within our Triad group. The breakout room discussion below follows on nicely from this point. Do we need a common understanding of the Quality Assurance for RPL (YES) is the answer in my opinion.

 **Ciara Staunton** 
6m ago

Questions for Breakout Rooms:
How does your institution benefit from implementing RPL?
To what extent there are challenges for validation within the four phases- do they differ?
Do we need a common understanding of Quality Assurance for RPL
Digitalisation and RPL- challenges and solutions?
Would a Peer Review Network within Ireland be helpful?
see less

Blanchardstown TU campus has a huge diversity in its student population. More than 50% of students are non-standard entry.

Lots of good stuff going on in pockets around the country, but a more focused universal system for RPL would be of benefit for everyone. Surely a common one size fits all approach as a base point would be good. And here it is in [progress](#). This is exactly what the National RPL project is attempting to do currently.

The RPL Practitioner Network (Ireland)

Is there legislation in Ireland for the rights of citizens to RPL? Looks like there is. [Recognition of Prior Learning for Providers](#). See direct quote below from QQI Quality & Qualifications Ireland. Also, an RPL Practitioner Network set up voluntarily (I find these to be the best kind of Networks).

QQI is responsible for establishing policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression (ATP) for providers. Our core statutory quality assurance guidelines require that provider policies and procedures for learner admission, progression and recognition enable:

- the fair recognition of education and training qualifications and periods of study, and
- the fair recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Reflections Week 4

Week 4: Conceptual Frameworks

Dr Josephine Finn

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/people/josephine-finn>



 Recognition of Prior Learning
Accrediting Quality

Professional Development Activity Robert Hickey

Week 4 Activity: Complete a Professional Development Activities Table

In the PD framework identify, document and share your PD prior learning with regard to RPL especially that which is non-accredited. Share and discuss within your triad how important you think it is to make this learning visible. Propose the overall position of the triad which reflects the views of its members.

	2. Unstructured Non-accredited (non-formal) ⁴	3. Structured Non-accredited (non-formal)	4. Accredited (formal) ⁴
Learning from these activities comes from their collaborative nature	These activities are independently led by the individual. Engagement is driven by the individual's needs/interests. Individuals source the material themselves	Organised activities (by an institution, network or disciplinary membership body). They are typically facilitated and have identified learning objectives	Accredited programmes of study (ECTS or similar credits)
Examples – Conversations with colleagues, peer networking, peer observations, online blogs/discussion forums	Examples - Reading articles, following social media, self-study, watching video tutorials, keeping a reflective teaching journal/portfolio, preparing an article for publication	Examples - Workshops, seminars, MOOCs, conferences, summer schools, structured collaborative projects	Examples - Professional Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD, EdD in: Teaching and Learning, Leadership in Education; Education Policy

I am looking forward to activity. It looks like it will be a worthwhile reflective activity. I suspect it might take a while. Link to my [Typology of PD activities](#).

Table 1: Typology of Professional Development Activities

Non-Accredited			4. Accredited (formal) ⁴
1. Collaborative Non-accredited (informal) ⁴	2. Unstructured Non-accredited (non-formal) ⁴	3. Structured Non-accredited (non-formal)	
Learning from these activities comes from their collaborative nature	These activities are independently led by the individual. Engagement is driven by the individual's needs/interests. Individuals source the material themselves	Organised activities (by an institution, network or disciplinary membership body). They are typically facilitated and have identified learning objectives	Accredited programmes of study (ECTS or similar credits)
Examples – Conversations with colleagues, peer networking, peer observations, online blogs/discussion forums	Examples - Reading articles, following social media, self-study, watching video tutorials, keeping a reflective teaching journal/portfolio, preparing an article for publication	Examples - Workshops, seminars, MOOCs, conferences, summer schools, structured collaborative projects	Examples - Professional Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD, EdD in: Teaching and Learning, eLearning, Leadership in Education; Education Policy

Week 4 Webinar Conceptual Frameworks

RPL Theoretic Frameworks

RPL Theoretic Frameworks

Theory associated with policy development (definitions)

How do we learn in experience?
(Experiential learning theory)

How do we access that learning to produce an RPL claim?
(Kolb's reflective process)

What is the difference between knowledge structures
outside and inside the academy? (Structures of
knowledge theory)

An epistemological clash. Learning inside V outside formal education.

RPL Assumptions

Basic Assumptions of RPL Concept

- Significant learning takes place outside the formal education system (Dewey)
- All learning can be formally recognised
- People not forced to repeat learning they have already

PILOT DEFINITION OF RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): The way in which a learner's prior learning, both formal (such as a qualification); non-formal (such as work-based training) and informal learning (learning gained through experience) is assessed and given a value.

<https://www.priorlearning.ie/resources-tools/pilot-framework-rpl-higher-education>

<https://www.priorlearning.ie/resources-tools/pilot-framework-rpl-higher-education>

Definition continued

- **Formal learning** takes place through programmes of study that are delivered by education providers and that attract awards/credits on the NFQ.
- **Non-formal learning** takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal NFQ certification. Examples of non-formal learning are learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace or in community-based settings - ***structured learning which has identified outcomes or purpose but is not credit earning on the NFQ***
- **Informal learning** is learning gained in life experiences – home, leisure, work, community, specific interests etc.– ***unplanned learning acquired through day to day, home or work activities.***

Autodidactic definition: relating to or being a person who learns or has learned a subject without the benefit of a teacher or formal education; self-taught

Webinar 4 breakout room activity

For consideration

Consider the definitions -
Does the categorisation of RPL into three distinct forms help/hinder your understanding of RPL?

10 minutes

Siobhan Mortell UCC and Patricia McGrath (adult education). We discussed Informal Learning. Learning acquired through day-to-day home and work activities. Stay at

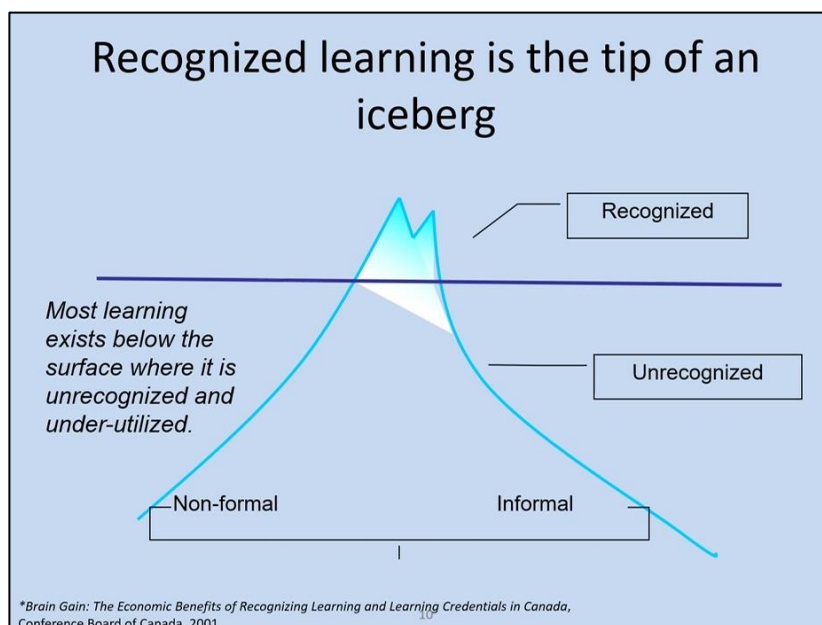
home parents were discussed and their lack of confidence when thinking about re-entering the paid workforce. We think maybe set up an RPL course these parents to allow them to reflect and realise their valued skills that they can take forward into either the paid workplace or going back to education.

What was RPL designed to address

- The problem of **recognising learning** gained outside formal education contexts including learning generally gained through experience (as identified by Dewey in 1930s).

Street smarts, life skills, real world experiences, grief, social interactions, friendships, family.

What is Learning and how to Recognise it?



Most of the learning happens outside the classroom. Albert Einstein said, "The only source of knowledge is experience,"

**Critique in terms of RPL– what we know NOT
how and where we learned**

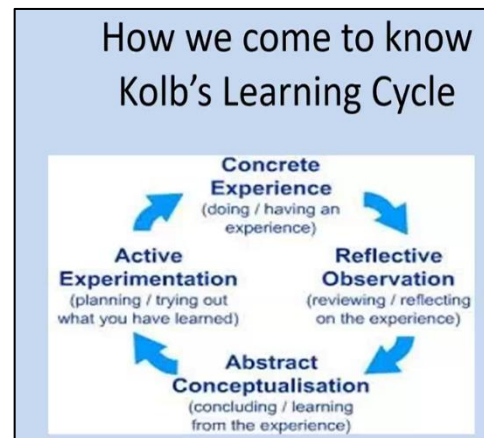
THUS

RPL is concerned with **what we know and have
learned** rather than how [OR WHERE]we learn
in experience (Challis 1996)

What we learn or have learned is what is measured with RPL which is good, however we will need to express this or show this through where and how we learned it. This can be difficult to articulate.

Bernstein
Types of formal knowledges

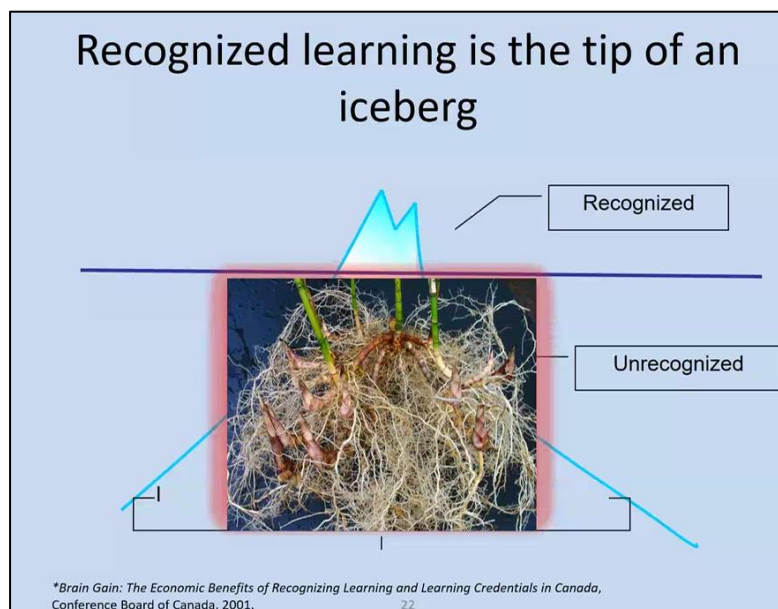
- Vertical – sciences, maths, engineering, accountancy...
Strong grammar and unified language (1993)
- Horizontal
Social sciences, humanities
Specialist language and jargon



Vertical easier to measure initially with RPL, horizontal less easy to measure.

Critique of Kolb

- Rationalisation of experience (Michelson2016:30)
- Increased self-questioning and allowed claimants to objectify their learning; clarify and organise their knowledge (Lamoreaux 2005).



The uniqueness of learning for an individual shown in the iceberg analogy with risen plants network of roots.

Links

- www.priorlearning.ie
- <https://rpl-ireland.ie/> (Please join, it is free!)
- <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/recognition-of-Prior-Learning-RPL.aspx>
- <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu>
- <http://capla.ca/>
- https://opencourses.teachingandlearning.ie/open_course/recognition-of-prior-learning/
- <https://extendedcampus.cit.ie/rpl>

Getting into the experience of RPL Exercise in RPL Practice

- Select a course from the list provided or other course of your choice
- Select a module/part of the course where you could claim prior learning
- Gather evidence of your learning to support your claim
- Reflect on the process in terms of:
a) types of evidence available to you b) Strength of claim
- Make a note of your reflections

Reflections Week 5

Week 5 Activity

Identify the RPL policy at an institutional/ provider, faculty, departmental or programme level in your institution. The focus may also be on Springboard + funded programmes or externally funded/ supported programmes within the institution/ education provider. It may also be related to the sector in which you are working.

Then consider the policy for its application, i.e., how is the policy being implemented, e.g., success, challenges, etc.

- Is it used for access into a programme?
- Is it for exemptions within the programme?
- What kind of learning does it recognise? Prior formal learning, internal or external to the institution? Informal or Non-formal learning gained prior to registering in the institution?
- What is the accessibility and availability of the policy to learners and staff?

In your triads discuss each of the policies, identify what is common and what is different? Is it possible to determine the reasons for the differences?



QQI

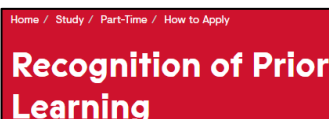
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhó Cállochta agus Cállochtal Éireann

The 'RPL in HE' Digital Badge community consider RPL Policy

May 2023

Andrina Wafer (awafer@qqi.ie)

TU Dublin RPL Policy



What is RPL?

RPL (recognition of prior learning) is a process which acknowledges, and gives value to, learning achieved prior to registering for a TU Dublin programme or prior to seeking a TU Dublin award.

Prior learning may be a result of successful participation in a formal learning programme for which you were awarded certification. If you use your prior certificated learning towards a TU Dublin award, the process is called: Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL).

Prior learning may also be an outcome of non-formal or informal learning achieved through work, voluntary activities or private study, for which you may not have a certificate. The process of using this type of learning for higher education purposes is called: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

It is not uncommon for both APCL and APEL to be considered together in an RPL process.

What RPL is used for in TU Dublin

RPL can be used for a number of purposes in TU Dublin including the following:

1. for entry to programme at the initial stage where the applicant may not meet the standard entry requirements
2. for advanced entry to a programme at a stage beyond the first stage
3. for transfer from one programme to another
4. for exemption from some programme elements or from programme modules
5. for non-standard entry to post-graduate programmes where the applicant may not have the standard honours primary degree
6. for application towards a full award such as a doctorate.

Words of caution: Not all TU Dublin programmes offer RPL for entry, for transfer, for module exemptions or for full award. Where RPL is available there may be specific conditions, limitations and application procedures.

Week 5 Webinar Policies

RPL QQI policy discussion.

Policy

What do we think we mean- and what do we expect of policy?

- *a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual* (Oxford Dictionary)
 - Similar to plans, actions, proposed actions, blueprint, strategy
Used to set limits, and to embody vision, mission, strategic objectives and law
- *a set of ideas or a plan for action followed by a business, a government, a political party, or a group of people* (Cambridge University Press)
- *'It helps to key Actors; assess their interest, power, alliance, position and importance in relation to the policy.'* (Nursinganswers.net...)
- *'Public policy is there to influence how other important decisions are made, and it's usually formed as a response to a specific issue that is of interest to the public. Public policy is supposed to offer some sort of solution to a problem.'...a way of governance, system, prudence..*

More robust thinking on public policy:

- *'Findings lend empirical support to the argument that many educational researchers in Ireland struggle to influence central policy and offers some explanatory insights.'* Dr John O' Connor, QQI: [Evidence based education policy in Ireland: insights from educational researchers: Irish Educational Studies: Vol 0, No 0 \(tandfonline.com\)](#)
- IPA- [00 Contents Admin 62 No. 4 \(ipa.ie\)](#) Tom Ferris offers perspectives on the development of policy- **rationalist, incrementalist and variations** on incrementalist
- QQI approach to policy development: [Policy Development Programme Snapshot Jan 2019.pdf \(qqi.ie\)](#)

I am not a fan of policy as I feel it has little impact on what I do day to day. As a teacher I don't think policy directly affects my practice on the ground, which is my focus. At the end of the day managers and leaders may try and follow policy but is that mainly to ensure funding or that they don't get their hands slapped? Policy like everything else are open to interpretation. As it filters down it usually wares out or becomes watered down or even worse distorted into something else altogether. I don't have faith in the

organisations that are been given the power or responsibility to measure RPL or decide if something is worthwhile. Ultimately it will be a subject decision.

A Policy framework in the RPL space

- Global
- European
- National
 - Sectoral (can include multinational)
 - Regional
 - Local

- Can compete! Objectives don't always align.
- Who determines the policy- 'qui bono'- the realities of funding

RPL Challenge and Definition

RPL: The challenge of definition

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

- **Recognition of prior learning** means the *validation* of learning outcomes, whether *from* formal education or non-formal or informal learning, acquired before requesting validation.'

- **Validation** means a *process of confirmation* by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:
 1. IDENTIFICATION through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;
 2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual's experiences;
 3. a formal ASSESSMENT of these experiences; and
 4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification'

[Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning \(europa.eu\)](#)

Pathway to policy

An extraordinary twenty years!

- RPL embedded in an Action, Transfer and Progression and Recognition of all learning, for all learners, National Framework of Qualifications and Determinations

QQI's ATP Heritage and Policy Genesis

- Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999
- National Framework of Qualifications (2003)
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (Amended)

Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999-

- Established Authority, two awards councils
- *Objects* spoke to *all* learners and *all* learning
- Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications (2003)
- As part of the NFQ, Vision for ATP, 7 operational principles: rooted in awards, programmes, equality, opportunity and all learners- from principles came objectives, including supplementary Framework policies, with assigned actions, relating to
 - Credit (including RPL)
 - Transfer and progression routes
 - Entry arrangements
 - Information provision
- *Directed towards learners- not the curation of systems*

Webinar 5 breakout room activity

Discussion; break out

- Your policy experience in relation to RPL
- How do you feel about
 - SDG 4: ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning for all?
 - Focusing on 'individuals' rather than 'learners or 'enrolled learners'?
 - How should RPL policy be conceptualised and contextualised? An academic NFQ? Programmes awards, other?
 - A 'phiropter test' on what you know...
 - Is it easier to 'do the course'?
 - Is progression and ultimately recognition in the desired field better if the person 'does the course' in the traditional way?
 - Is the person required to do taught elements to augment RPL?
 - Do programme participation outcomes favour those who are not time or finance poor those who seek more efficient participation because of prior learning?
 - Does the person get access to the progression programme without formal accreditation/documentation resulting from their RPL process?
 - Does evidence for assessment really have to look the same as for taught programme to provide sufficient reassurance or to meet the LOs?
 - If the answer is yes to any of these, there is at best a distance to travel with an RPL policy, approach to assessment and or to credits and the recognition of awards.

Policy is needed and should be used in a positive way however often it is not used correctly. Will policy be a driver for RPL? Who knows. Policy is good, RPL is good, the issue that everyone seems to have is with implementation on the ground. No staff, no money, lack of guidance.

Policy Supports

Policy Parallel supports

- **IRQ.ie** -register of Qualifications on the National Framework and of programmes associated with them. In time will include Learning Outcomes
- SOLAS PLSS- allows ETBs enter a programme for funding purposes against RPL rather than tuition, and meet certification targets in Performance agreements through RPL. QQI Certification QBS also provides for logging RPL as the process on which basis certification is requested.
- Ireland committed to the implementation of the **2012 Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning**, whereby **Member States would have arrangements in place for RPL by 2018 enabling individuals to achieve awards or partial awards through a four stage process.**
- Ireland also committed to and further has signed up as one of seven Member States to continue monitoring implementation of the **2016 Recommendation, Upskilling Pathways** which provides for RPL for people with qualifications and skills below level 5.
- The **Programme for Government, 'Our Shared Future'** (2020), specifically in the context of the Further Education and Community Education sectors, committed to the development and implementation 'of a standardised system of accreditation of prior learning, taking account of previous education, skills, work experience and engagement in society.'
- The **National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030** states that a national framework for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) must be developed and recognised by all higher education institutions
- The **FET Strategy** in the context of Facilitating Lifelong Learning Pathways, states that RPL should be an important feature of provision.

Additional supports

- QQI is responsible to report to the EQF Advisory Group on progress nationally on the implementation of the 2012 Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning
- Additionally, the European Commission publish European Guidelines for validation non-formal and informal learning- new guidelines are published (2023) , interactive with case studies.
- CEDEFOP bi-annually develop Country Inventories documenting national progress, Synthesis and Thematic reports and make these available as part of a searchable database [European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning | Cedefop \(europa.eu\)](#); IE received encouraging feedback. Measuring progress.
- The current Inventory is underway. Took account of published policies, case studies, research.
- Nationally, significant collaborative projects and initiatives have provided platforms for cross sectoral discussion, engagement and the further development of shared perspectives
 - RPL Practitioner Network Ireland (Policy and Practice orientation) (website, community of practice and newly formed steering group!)
 - VISKA
 - TOBAR (91 learners achieved awards which included 21 major and 386 minor awards across Level 3,4,5 and 6, evaluation report pending)
 - National Recognition of Prior Learning Project in HE (HCI) www.priorlearning.ie , other HCI projects
 - Emergent other networks- CE, FET, HE

- **So- have we a national policy on RPL?**
 - PFG, National Strategies, Funders-SOLAS, HEA, National Skills Council, NUI, QQI, Commitment to EU Recommendation, Global Recognition Convention, Automatic Mutual Recognition, OECD recommendations
 - What is missing?
- **QQI RPL policy will be reviewed in 2023- new policy, guidelines and criteria**
 - A national approach to credit- viable? Desirable? Relevant?
 - Learning Outcomes; Programme LOs, all to be achieved.
 - Assessment
 - Programme Validation
- **QQI developing a policy on exemptions for QQI awards**
 - Confusion with certified learning and how to manage it!
- **QQI conducting research into actual practice in ATP**
- **Broader Context- Future proofing policy**
- **Lifelong Learning Ambitions- 60% participation targets by 2030.**
- **Post COVID recovery- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion**
- **Obvious challenges and opportunities..**
 - Demographics, mobility, displacement- **global culture...**
 - Learning where standards don't yet exist
 - The unbearable cost of exclusion

Thinking hats...

What do you need

- Culturally
- Institutionally
- Situationally
- Dispositionally

From an RPL policy, criteria, guidelines?

What is the unique contribution that your sector might make in the 'ask' from policy?



Thinking of a motto or tag line for RPL. RPL guilty until proven innocent. Honouring the Past, Enriching the Future. As mentioned previously the main issue seems to be resources/people/money. Unless it is enshrined in Law/Policy and money allocated to every institution or even better a new service/institution set up specifically for people to avail of RPL. A place where someone can go to get personal advice. I would prefer an automated system powered by AI to help people, as individuals can vary hugely in their knowledge, ability, and enthusiasm/willingness for helping people. I have come

across so many useless people in these types of jobs. They often cause more harm than anything else.

Reflections Week 6

I don't think I will do the Facilitators Badge as I don't see myself delivering this Badge at any time. Although I might be interested in being involved, it just is not my job, and I can't see me getting the opportunity to do this at any stage. TU Dublin is currently all over the place after the merger. I don't know where my own future is going never mind the institution/schools etc. I have become a very small fish in a much bigger pond.

Week 6 The Irish Context

Agenda for Session 6

1. HCI Pillar 3 RPL Project

www.priorlearning.ie

2. Complete the Survey

3. Claiming your Badge: Badges can be claimed upon completion and submission of your Reflective Journal to Moodle.

4. Facilitator Badge

5. Week 6 Activity

Week 6 Webinar the Irish Context

Digital Badge Criteria

Digital Badge Criteria

- . Explain the concept of RPL and reflect on its application within their own setting.
- . Reflect on the potential impact of RPL for an institution, its staff and students.
- . Identify existing policies and consider their alignment with practice.
- . Analyse the relationship between programme and module learning outcomes and the RPL candidate.

Triad contract has been updated. Yes, I know more about RPL. It was great to have the weekly discussions around RPL. I know where to go now to get more info on RPL however, how these are interpreted and applied will be up to someone else in my organisation I suspect. I probably could do with reading more around the subject especially with regards to policy and my own institution. There is still time this week so I will probably do this.

National update for RPL Project

This last webinar was just a selection of project leads from different institutions giving their updates on the project. They were bound to be putting their best foot forward so I can only take what any of them said with a pinch of salt :-).

Week 6 Triad Activity

Week 6 Activity

Take an award, module or programme on the NFQ which you are familiar with and review it for compatibility with the use of RPL.

- Is it possible to RPL against the learning outcomes?
- Could someone achieve these outside of the formal system?
- What do you think would/ could someone provide as evidence for the achievement of the learning outcomes?

On review did anything arise that would influence your view going forward which you hadn't considered?

Share your review of the module/ programme within the triad.

Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Development (module Learning Outcomes)

1. Have a knowledge and appreciation of the following areas: • the concepts of building and cohesion; • the stages of enterprise development; • the difficulties and obstacles in enterprise development; • the level of commitment and motivation needed to establish an enterprise, • the level of support in Ireland for Enterprise start-ups.
2. Put together a business plan from an idea or proposal
3. Present business ideas to financiers, both state and private sector

Learning Outcome	RPL	Evidence
Knowledge & appreciation of concepts of building & cohesion.	Experience of working in a close nit team.	List of references/contact information for people they have worked with closely within their business set-up and running. And examples of how they worked with them.
stages of enterprise dev	Starting, growing, maturing, then renewal or decline of a business.	Proof of setting up and running a business. Documentation, CRO, TAX statement, letter from accountant.
Difficulties & obstacles in enterprise dev	Fear of debt, failure, Access to Finance, Loss of job security, Sales & profitability, Time and effort, Complexity of regulation	Reflective piece outlining obstacles and hurdles faced and overcome during their business development.
level of commitment &	Tenacity and commitment to long hours, and	Reflective piece listing and describing impact of running their

motivation needed to establish an enterprise	success. Greater freedom, income, influence, control & creativity.	own business has had on their lives.
level of support in Ireland for enterprise start-ups	Enterprise Ireland, business funding, advice, mentoring, practical help, tax incentives.	Proof/documentation correspondence showing any support, funding, advice, or tax incentives received over the duration of the business.

Reflection

Having completed this exercise it makes me think that documenting and reflecting on the applicant's experience will play a big part in this RPL activity. So, a good narration will be required. This makes me think even more so that a Large Language Model generative/conversational AI tool would be very useful for this as it could assist the applicant in writing such a narrative using the correct terminology and language. The likes of tax documentation, company/business correspondence and possible references from people might also be required as part of this process.

Module/Programme Learning Outcomes (what's the difference)

Learning / Programme Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. (ECTS Users' Guide, 2005) (Kennedy. D, 2007)

Programme outcomes are statements of what the learner will be able to demonstrate at the end of a learning process. Programme outcomes are written for a typical or average student and they may be aspirational. They are not, therefore, directly testable. For example, programme outcomes may evidence areas of learning that are the outcomes of the student's experience of engagement in the programme, on the basis that the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts. (Moon 2002 p.142)(Kennedy.D, 2007 page 52)

[Top of document](#)