

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

FET POLICY

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1. Recognition of Prior Learning

The Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016-V2) include stipulations that providers of education and training have; *'Fair recognition of education and training qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.'*

CEDEFOP define the formal recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access to education and training opportunities or for the attainment of appropriate certification based on the formal recognition of prior learning as: the *'validation of non-formal and informal learning'* (Cedefop -2015. European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office).

WWETB is committed to the fair recognition of prior learning and endeavour to develop processes that will accommodate a consistent and practical validation of prior certified learning in a quality assured manner and appropriate to the contexts in which they will be applied. WWETB does not currently offer a formal validation process for recognition of prior experiential learning, be that informal or non-formal learning as this is still under development.

2. Principles of Assessment in relation to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Quality assured assessment ensures that in criterion referenced assessment 'learners are assessed and the assessment judgment is made based on whether the learner has reached the required national standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the award' (QQI, 2013 p.5). Central to quality assured assessment is the assumption that learners are assessed in a fair and consistent manner in line with the award standard. Quality assured assessment ensures adherence to the principles of assessment.

The following sets forth the principles of assessment which apply to this document: these principles are based on the QQI (2013) principles for assessment.

1. Validity

Validity is a fundamental assessment principle ensuring that an assessment measures what it is designed to measure: the relevant standard of knowledge, skill or competence required for an award should be assessed.

Validity in assessment occurs when:

- Assessment is fit for purpose (i.e. a practical assessment assesses a practical skill)
- Learners can produce evidence which can be measured against the award standard
- Assessors can make accurate assessment decisions
- Assessment is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it

2. Reliability

Reliability in assessment ensures that assessment measurement is accurate: the knowledge, skills and competence which the assessment measures should produce reliable and accurate results.

Reliability in assessment ensures that results are consistent under similar conditions.

Reliability in assessment occurs when:

- The assessment is based on valid assessment techniques
- Assessment conditions are consistent
- Learner evidence is reliable
- Results are consistent across various assessors, contexts, conditions and learners over time.

3. Fair

Fairness in assessment supports the validity and reliability principles and provides equal opportunity to all learners. Fairness in assessment ensures: learners have access to appropriate resources/equipment in assessment; assessment design and implementation are fair to all learners; and policies and procedures exist to ensure fair assessment of learners.

4. Quality

Quality in assessment ensures that all assessment processes are quality assured.

5. Transparency

Transparency in assessment ensures that assessment policy and procedures provide clarity to all relevant stakeholders.

Based on QQI Principles for Assessment (QQI, 2013)

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 sets out the statutory basis for QQI's (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) engagement with RPL. QQI have responsibility for policy of access, transfer and progression of learners (QQI 2017). The provider, is responsible for having a consistent approach to RPL and implementation must be in accordance with the provider's policy on Access, Transfer and Progression. The provider's Quality Assurance System overarches these principles and ensures learner achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent manner in line with the award standard.

WWETB is committed to utilising RPL as an instrument for: (i) determining standard access equivalences; (ii) for the award of credit; (iii) exemptions to learners with qualifications.

The complexity of RPL practices in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector is acknowledged (QQI, 2017). This document should be viewed as a guiding document for FET centres for the formal process of validating prior certified learning.

3. Glossary

CAS	Common Awards System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
FET	Further Education and Training
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certified Learning
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
WWETB	Waterford & Wexford Education and Training Board

4. Definitions

4.1. Exemption

Exemptions exist where learners have been awarded accredited certification for learning by an awarding body such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) or other recognised universities, colleges/institutes and awarding bodies. In such cases, the accredited certification has already been graded and when used as RPL is grade neutral. Exemptions may allow learners advanced entry to a programme and/or may be used for the achievement of the overall award.

4.2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recent Irish research suggests that a commonly agreed definition of RPL does not currently exist (QQI, 2017). For the purpose of this document, the following definition has been used. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can “be used by the learner to gain entry to a programme; gain exemptions within a programme; gain credit towards an award.

RPL involves awarding the learner recognition in the form of initial or advanced admission to a programme, credits within a programme, exemption(s) from element(s) of a programme. RPL cannot be claimed for based on the completion of an element of a module.

RPL can be subdivided into Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL). WWETB currently offers a formal process for RPCL which is outlined in this document. WWETB’s formal process for RPEL is under development

4.3. Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) or other recognised universities, colleges/institutes and awarding bodies. Prior certified learning can also include qualifications awarded by bodies abroad, such as the City & Guilds of London Institute.

Prior certified learning may entitle the learner to exemptions on a programme, not credits. As this certified learning has already been awarded credit, the learner does not receive credits for it again, but recognition in the form of exemptions. RPCL may be recognised for exemptions on a programme. Exemptions are grade neutral and do not contribute to the overall calculation of the grade of the major award.

5. RPL Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. The Programme Coordinator/ Principal

The Programme Coordinator/Principal must ensure that all staff and learners are made aware of:

- the existence of an RPL policy and RPL requirements
- the potential benefits of RPL
- the appropriate support relating to enabling the learner to compile the necessary course information required (this might include designating another staff member to provide the support)

The Programme Coordinator/ Principal must inform the learner of the outcome of the RPL decision.

5.2. The Learner

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

It is the learner's responsibility to apply for the RPCL. Learners must submit their application on the RPL Application Form (Appendix 1) to their Programme Coordinator within a reasonable timeframe (**recommended timeframe: ten (10) working days**) of the module commencement.

Learners should also include original certificates, results, programme details and, where possible, learning outcomes of certified modules completed. Learners should be advised to participate in the module(s) until a decision has been made (and written confirmation received) on whether to grant the exemption or not (in line with the individual Centre policy).

5.3 The RPL Assessor

The Quality Assurance Unit will serve as the RPCL assessor. This may include consultation with a subject matter expert where appropriate.

6. Recognition of Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL) Process

6.1. About RPCL

RPCL is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) or other recognised universities, colleges/institutes and awarding bodies. Prior certified learning can also include qualifications awarded by bodies abroad, such as the City & Guilds of London Institute.

This prior learning can be recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications and may entitle the learner to:

- Admission to a programme or programme of study
- Advanced entry on the programme
- Exemptions from some parts of a programme

QQI (2015) provide details regarding exemptions for the Purpose of a Compound (Major/Special Purpose/Supplemental) Award.

6.2. Types of RPCL

There are 3 types of RPCL considered in this process (see Figure 1.2)

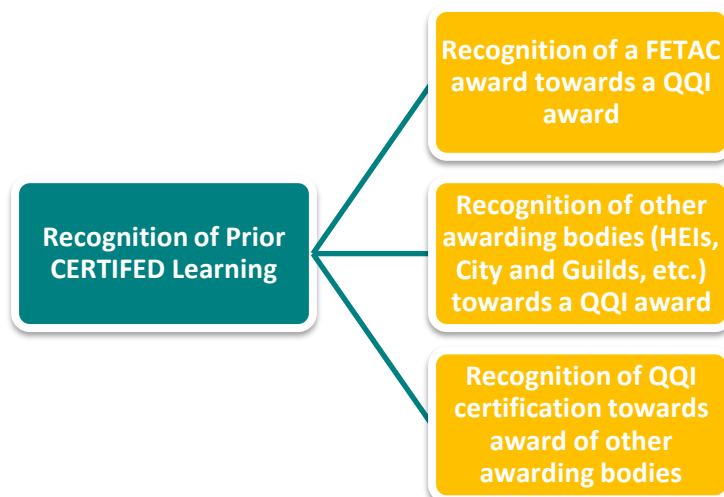


Figure 1.2 Types of RPCL

a) Recognition of a FETAC award towards a QQI award

“Where a FETAC component is not mapped to a CAS (Common Award System) component, then direct exemption using that FETAC component is not possible” (QQI, 2015, p.1). In this instance, **RPCL will apply**.

Where a FETAC component is mapped to a CAS component, but is more than 5 years old, then an exemption is not possible, and **RPCL will apply**.

Where a FETAC component is mapped to a CAS component and is less than 5 years old, then an exemption is possible, and **RPCL will not apply**.

Where a learner has achieved CAS award, and has thus met the learning outcomes for that award as currently published on the QQI website, then the learner has achieved that award, regardless of the age of the certificate. In this instance, the 5-year rule does not apply: the learner’s award will be recognised by the QBS, and it is not necessary to apply for either an exemption or RPCL.

If the learning for which recognition is sought for a QQI award, is certified outside of CAS, **RPCL will apply**.

The following must be considered as part of this process (see Table 1.1).

Comparison of Learning Outcomes	It is recommended that the RPL assessor compares the learning outcomes of the prior certified learning to the learning outcomes of the module(s)/programme in which the learner is seeking the exemption(s): this must be completed in line with the provider’s RPL policy while adhering to the award standard and principles of assessment. Gaps in learning may be identified and supports put in place to address these gaps.
Currency of RPCL	It is recommended that the RPCL must have been achieved in an appropriate timeframe. For example, ICT of ten years ago is of limited benefit today on a current programme, while some culinary training outcomes or communication skills may be more timeless.

Table 1.1 Considerations for RPCL

b) Recognition other awarding bodies (HEIs, City and Guilds, etc.) towards a QQI award

QQI recognises the value of awards made by another awarding body where the awarding body is:

- nationally recognised in its own country
- operating a quality assured awarding process (QQI, 2018)

Where an award is not on the [published list](#), the learner is required to provide the relevant learning programme and original transcript of results, with their application, in order to apply for RPCL.

Learners seeking *Statements of Equivalence* for foreign qualifications may be referred to **NARIC** (<http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions>) to have their qualifications aligned with the appropriate Irish qualification. *Qualifications Recognition* is the QQI body responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

c) Recognition of QQI certification towards award of other awarding bodies

The recognition of QQI certification towards an award of any other awarding body is dealt with in line with the procedures of the specific awarding body.

6.3. RPCL Application Process

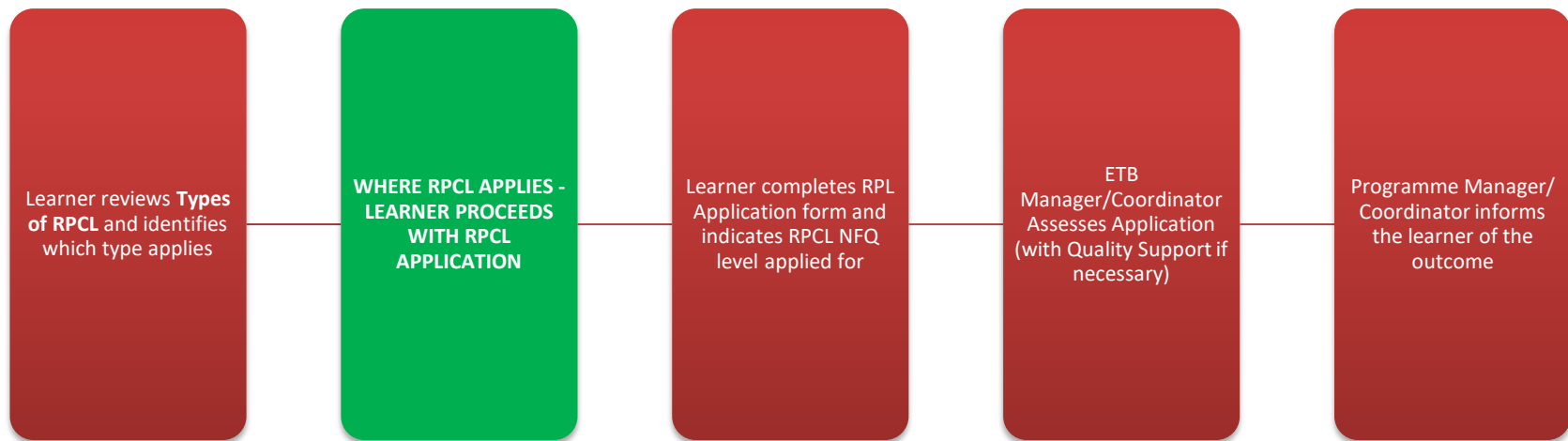


Figure 1.3 RPCL Application Process

In the case of exemption applications, the prior certified learning, which the learner is basing his/her exemption on, should be at the same (or higher) NFQ level than the level the learner is seeking the exemption in. The process of recognising prior learning should maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.

1. Learner reviews **Types of RPCL** and identifies which type applies (see Section 6.2)

WHERE RPCL APPLIES - LEARNER PROCEEDS WITH RPCL APPLICATION

2. Learner completes RPL Application form and indicates RPCL NFQ level applied for.
The Programme Coordinator forwards the application without delay to the QA Manager.
3. The QA Unit assess the application and appoint a subject matter expert where required.
4. The Programme Coordinator/ Principal (or person designated by them) supports learner in the application process and guides them on documentation required.
See Table 1.1 for considerations in this process.
5. The QA Manager shall consider the application and agree a decision regarding it within a reasonable timeframe (recommended timeframe: **ten (10) working days**) of receipt of the application in line with the provider's RPL Policy.
6. The Programme Coordinator/Principal in turn informs the learner of the outcome.

Appendix 1: Recognition of Prior Learning Application Form

Please complete all sections of the application form

PART A	
Centre Name:	
Learner Name:	
Learner Address:	
Learner Contact Number:	
Learner Email Address:	
Programme Code/Title:	
Award Code/Title:	
Date of Application:	

PART B	
Recognition for Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL) If yes, please indicate which RPCL you are applying for:	Yes/No
a) Recognition of FETAC award towards a QQI award	Yes/No
b) Recognition other awarding bodies (HEIs, City and Guilds, etc.) towards a QQI award	Yes/No
c) Recognition of QQI certificate towards award of other awarding bodies	<i>Please see specific awarding body procedures</i>

PART C		
Details of application:		
Supporting evidence: (Please list all supporting evidence included in this application)		
Exemptions (based on RPCL) in respect of:		
Module Code	Module Title	Module Level

Learner Signature:

Date:

Programme Coordinator Signature:

Date:

Programme Coordinator Name:

References

CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) (2011) *Glossary: Quality in Training and Education*. CEDEFOP: Luxembourg.

CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) Murphy, I. (2016) *2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning*. CEDEFOP: Greece

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2013) *Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers*. Available at: <http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2C%20Revised%202013.pdf> [Accessed February 28, 2018]

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2015) Exemptions for the Purpose of a Compound (Major / Special Purpose) Award. Available at: https://qhelp.qqi.ie/providers/certification-queries/common-award-system-cas-exemptions/Exemptions_Update_December_2015.docx [Accessed March 14, 2018]

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2017) *Recognition of Prior Learning in Irish Further Education and Training (FET)* Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Prior%20Learning%20Report.pdf> [Accessed February 28, 2018]

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