

POLICY:	Recognition of Prior Learning	POLICY REFERENCE:	P5
QSI SECTION:	S6: Assessment of Learners	VERSION:	V1.0
RELATED QSI:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL), Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) • Learner Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Procedure • Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) • Examinations & Practical Examinations Procedure: Planning, Conducting and Concluding • Learner Admissions Policy • Security of Assessment Material and Records Procedure • Learner Recruitment Appeals Procedure • Learner Assessment Malpractice Procedure • Extenuating Circumstances in Assessment Procedure 		

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List of Abbreviations

CAB	Certification Approval Board (CAB)
CAS	Common Awards System
ETB	Education and Training Board
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
ETBI	Education Training Board Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System
QASS	Quality Assurance Support Service
QBS	Quality Based System
QQI	Qualifications and Quality Ireland
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certified Learning
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RCCRS	Results Capture and Certification Request System
FETQS	Further Education and Training Quality System
TSO	Training Standards Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

LWETB recognise that the knowledge, skills and competencies of our learners can be gained through a range of learning experiences. LWETB is committed to enabling flexible learning pathways for all learners throughout our Further Education and Training programmes. This includes the recognition of prior formal education and training qualifications, prior experiential learning, non-formal and informal learning, for the purpose of access, transfer and progression. The RPL process within FET allows a learner to gain access to programmes and/or gain exemptions for partial or all of a programme/component(s) based on their previous demonstrated learning/experience.

This policy and related procedure have been developed by LWETBs FETQS Unit as a response to statutory guidelines and identified needs.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to present LWETB's procedures and processes for the implementation of recognition of prior learning (RPL) as a process to support access to programmes of learning and to provide a mechanism for validation of skills, knowledge and competencies gained through prior formal, non-formal and informal education, training and experience. The principal upon which it is based shall be as follows:

1. LWETB is committed to facilitating the RPL process and will consider and give value to all relevant learning.
2. Learner participation in RPL is voluntary.

3. The process of RPL must provide a demonstrated opportunity for access, transfer or progression to education, training and/or employment.
4. RPL must only be considered where the overall aim/outcome for the learner is an achievement of a Major Award.
5. The process of RPL will not create a barrier to participation.
6. The RPL process will be communicated clearly to Learners/Applicants, Assessors/Educators/Centre Managers & Coordinators and the RPL Mentor or any other stakeholder involved in the RPL process.
7. The process will be open, clear and transparent.
8. Recognition of prior learning will be operated in line with the quality assurance procedures of LWETB and associated awarding bodies.
9. The process and practice of RPL will be clearly documented and communicated.
10. Guidance and support will be available to applicants involved in the RPL process.

This policy document aims to support the process and practice of RPL in LWETB by providing a clear structure which can be used across the FET sector.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all LWETB’s QQI provision, with the exception of apprenticeships unless an apprenticeship is developed by LWETB. While this policy does not apply to learners accessing programmes and courses that are accredited by other awarding bodies, the RPL requirements of those certifying bodies will be adhered to.

This policy includes RPL for the purpose of access, exemptions and accreditation. In addition, all new programmes and courses submitted for validation to QQI will ensure that due consideration is given to RPL.

4. DEFINITIONS

Prior Learning is learning that has taken place prior to joining a course or programme of learning. LWETB recognises that prior learning may have been acquired through formal, non-formal or informal routes. CEDEFOP (2011) provides the following definitions which are outline in Table 1.

Table 1: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning

FORMAL LEARNING:	which takes place through programmes of study or training that are delivered by education or training providers, of which certification is attained upon completion. This is intentional Learning within a structured system.
NON-FORMAL LEARNING:	that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to formal certification. This is also intentional learning. Examples of non-formal learning are learning, and training activities undertaken in the workplace e.g. non certified PD webinars, voluntary sector, community based learning etc.
INFORMAL LEARNING	that takes place through life and work experience (can be referred to as experiential learning). Often it is learning that is unintentional and the learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to his or her knowledge, skills and competences.

5. RPL PRINCIPLES

RPL is primarily a form of assessment. LWETB has provided this policy and procedure on how to assess applicants in this way.

It is possible for LWETB to give the applicant a grade for the work assessed through RPL but the normal procedures for quality assuring validity of assessment outcomes must apply.

LWETB relies on the RPL Mentor to guide staff and applicants through the RPL process of gathering sufficient, reliable, and appropriate evidence to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

LWETB will review RPL applications under two processes

- a. Recognising prior certified Learning (RPCL)
- b. Recognising prior experiential learning (RPEL)

RPCL is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as QQI or other recognised awarding body

1. Recognising Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) – there are 3 types of RPCL

A. Recognition of Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) award towards a QQI award

- Recognition of a FETAC award towards a QQI award – where a FETAC component is not mapped to a CAS component, then a direct exemption is not possible. RPCL will apply.
- Where a FETAC component is mapped to a CAS component but is more than 5 years old an exemption is not possible and RPCL will apply.
- Where FETAC component is mapped to a CAS component and is less than 5 years old, then an exemption is possible. RPCL will not apply.

Where an applicant has achieved a CAS award, and has met the learning outcomes for that award as currently published on the QQI website, then the applicant has achieved that award, regardless of the age of the certificate. The applicants award will be recognised by the QQI Business System and it is not necessary to apply for an exemption or RPCL.

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

Considerations of RPCL

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)/programmes for which the applicant is seeking the exemption. 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 e.g. ICT of ten years ago is of

	limited benefit today on a current programme, while some culinary training outcomes may be more timeless.
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B. Recognition of other awarding bodies

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)

QQI has identified a listing of awards to which RPCL may be applied (QQI, 2018).

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

2. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) Process

RPEL is non-formal and informal learning acquired through experience or learning achieved from non-accredited bodies e.g. learning acquired in the workplace.

Access

Access means that learners are enabled to gain entry to a course at a level appropriate to their skills, knowledge and competencies.

Assessment of learners/applicants through course entry procedures (can include but is not limited to: application form, interview, aptitude tests, or screening etc) will provide information on the overall level of:

- prior certified learning
- prior experiential learning

Exemptions

Exemptions will be offered to learners where their certified learning equates to all of the learning outcomes of the module or modules that make up the course applied for. The qualification should have been achieved within the previous 5 years. Exemptions will only be granted for a full module that leads towards a major award. Exemptions may allow applicants advanced entry to a programme and/or may be used for the achievement of the overall award.

LWETB recognises that any new programmes that are developed or revalidated will incorporate criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of exemptions. (QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training, 2017)

6. RPL APPEALS

The applicant has the right to appeal the decision in relation to RPL. The applicant can appeal on the decision of the application, or the grade awarded. Appeals must be made within five days of the decision. In extenuating circumstances, the

Coordinator/Centre Manager may extend this time limit. All appeals must be made by using the RPL Appeals Application Form (see Appendix 2).

References

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016)
[https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance %20Guidelines.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf)
- Donegal ETB
- Education and Training) Act 2012 (Section 50 (3) (70) of Qualifications and Quality Assurance www.irishstatutebook.ie
- Kerry ETB <https://www.kerryetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FINAL-RPL-V1.2-March-2019.pdf>
- <https://www.donegaletb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RPL-Policy-and-Procedure-Version-1.pdf>
- European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning: Country Reports (European Commission, CEDEFOP, ICF International; 2014). https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Council_Recommendation_on_the_validation_20_December_2012.pdf
- Principles for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education. (QQI, 2005)
[https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Principles%20and%20Operational%20Guidelines%20for %20RPL%202005.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Principles%20and%20Operational%20Guidelines%20for%20RPL%202005.pdf)
- CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) (2011) Glossary: Quality in Training and Education.