

## Handout



**A1-2** Good practice in developing understanding about and engagement with RPL should:

Identify barriers and enablers to implementing RPL

- What are the barriers to implementing RPL at departmental and programme levels?
- What approaches can be used to help overcome the barriers?
- Who (or which groups/committees) should have responsibility for implementing such approaches?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning  
<http://tiny.cc/qaarpl003>

**B1-4** Good practice in departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision should:

Establish clear roles and responsibilities for RPL

- To what extent have clear roles and responsibilities for RPL been established within the department?
- Have staff been assigned to roles?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning  
<http://tiny.cc/qaarpl011>

**C1-4** Good practice in implementing RPL in programmes should:

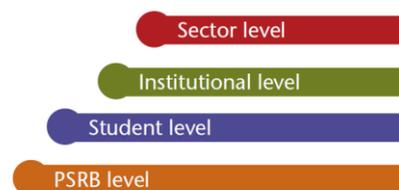
Design simple RPL assessment frameworks

- To what extent can assessment frameworks be designed to enable easy comparisons between assessment of informal/non-formal learning and formal learning?
- To what extent can assessment be linked to work-based learning and working practices?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning  
<http://tiny.cc/qaarpl021>

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<http://tiny.cc/qaarpl001>



# Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL

Front

Back

**A1-1** Good practice in developing understanding about and engagement with RPL should:

**Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised**

- Do staff understand what informal and non-formal learning are and how they can be assessed and validated?
- Do staff have believe that informal and non-formal learning is inferior to formal learning and accreditation?
- Do staff appreciate the benefits of formal and informal learning for learners, employers and institutions?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

**Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised**

- Provide information and outline guidance on recognition of informal and non-formal learning for academic, professional support services and administrative staff.
- Use the guidance materials provided as part of this toolkit together with institutional materials and adapt them to the department's needs and contexts.
- Provide guidance in a variety of media e.g.
  - Talking head video interviews with stakeholders such as learners, staff and employers.
  - Screencasts e.g. videos showing audio narration of PowerPoint presentations.
  - Mind-maps.
  - Web-sites
  - Podcasts.
  - Q-cards.
  - Posters.
  - QR codes (to link print with online media).
  - E-books.
  - Media targeted at use by mobile devices.
- Provide information and outline guidance for other stakeholders relevant to the Department e.g. learners, employers and PSRBs
- Ensure that information and guidance emphasises:
  - Key RPL principles (Learner focused; Accessible; Flexible; Reliable, transparent and consistent; Quality assured)
  - Importance of and benefits from RPL - for learners, universities, employers and PSRBs.
  - Advertising and marketing materials should integrate accurate information and identify named sources for information/guidance
  - Department policy and guidance material for RPL should align with overarching HEI policy and guidance
  - Awareness of widening access agreements is required
  - Awareness of changing policy on overseas students, TIER4 arrangements, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is required.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning  
Based on the Viewpoints model: <http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home>

## A0 worksheet

- Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL
- Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision
- Implementing RPL in programmes

Overall objectives

Priority Place cards here

1

2

3

Commentary

- Tick which stage you are undertaking.
- Write your overall objectives for this activity on the A0 worksheet e.g. *to review and enhance flexible curriculum provision on a specific programme.*
- As a group, choose which cards you want to focus on and place them front-up on the A0 worksheet - and categorise them into different priorities.
- Turn the cards over to show possible different options to consider.
- On each card, tick those options that are important to discuss (you could also prioritise these individual options).
- As a group, discuss all the ticked options and write commentary to clarify why these are important.
- Capture the final worksheet using e.g. a digital camera.

# Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision

Front

Back

**B1-1** Good practice in departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision should:

## Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance

- To what extent are applicants provided with clear, accurate and accessible advice and guidance?
- Do applicants have clear points of contact for advice and guidance?
- Do applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

## Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance

- Applicants are provided with a full understanding of each of the three stages of the RPL process:
  - Advice and guidance
  - Support
  - Recognition / assessment
- The applicant is provided with key points of contact for reliable and frequent advice and guidance.
- Preliminary information and guidance on RPL and RPiL is provided, including:
  - RPL principles
  - Policy
  - Costs
- The advice and guidance ensures that applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process.
- The advice and guidance addresses likely questions from applicants:
  - What is RPL?
  - Why are there two different types?
  - What is involved?
  - How do I make a claim for RPL or RPiL?
  - Who do I talk to for advice/who will support me through the process?
  - Is there any cost involved?
  - How much credit can I gain?
  - How long will it take?
- Advice and guidance is reinforced in written or electronic form as well as through discussion and is clear, accurate and accessible.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning  
Based on the Viewpoints model: <http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home>

## A0 worksheet

- Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL
- Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision ✓
- Implementing RPL in programmes

Overall objectives

Priority Place cards here

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# Implementing RPL in programmes

Front

Back

**C1-1** Good practice in implementing RPL in programmes should:

**Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together with core principles and staff responsibilities for RPL**

- To what extent have the needs, drivers and priorities for RPL in the programme been established?
- To what extent has the programme team reviewed the Departmental Vision & Communications plan and the RPL departmental implementation plan and contextualised them for the programme?
- To what extent does the programme adopt guiding principles for RPL?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

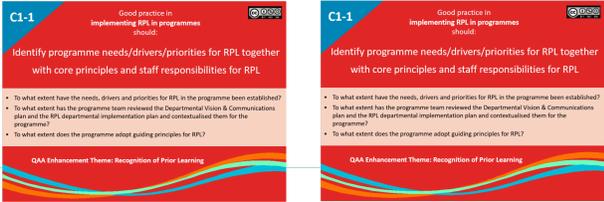
**Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together with core principles and staff responsibilities for RPL**

- The departmental vision and communications plan is contextualised for the programme in order to establish the following:
  - Learner needs, profiles and priorities for RPL
  - Employer and PSRB needs, profiles and priorities for RPL
- Institutional drivers, goals, policies including alignment with institutional and departmental priorities
- The programme identifies how RPL will be used i.e.
  - RPL for admission to a programme of study
  - RPL for entry with advanced standing
  - RPL that leads to an award
  - RPL as a formative experience to help students gain confidence and develop academic skills
- The programme team adopt and contextualise the institutional/ departmental RPL processes.
- The maximum number of credits for RPL is established.

- Credit gained through informal and experiential learning has equal value to that gained through formal learning, ie parity of esteem.
- Alignment between RPL (design and implementation), QA processes and Quality Code indicators is made explicit.
- The programme adopts clear and explicit principles for RPL design and implementation.
  - learner focused
  - accessible
  - flexible
  - reliable, transparent and consistent
  - quality assured.
- The programme team assigns staff to roles (with key responsibilities) that have been identified in the Departmental plan e.g.
  - RPL Administrator.
  - RPL Advisor (mentor).
  - RPL Assessor.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning  
Based on the Viewpoints model: <http://wiki.ulstec.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home>

## A0 worksheet

<p>① <b>Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL</b></p> <p>② <b>Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision</b></p> <p>③ <b>Implementing RPL in programmes</b> ✓</p>	
Overall objectives	
<p>Priority Place cards here</p> <p>① ✓</p> <p>②</p> <p>③</p>	
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① **Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL**

② **Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision**

③ **Implementing RPL in programmes**

Overall objectives

Priority

Place cards here

①

②

③

Commentary

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developing understanding about and engagement with RPL  
should:



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QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

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- Provide guidance in a variety of media e.g.
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- Provide information and outline guidance for other stakeholders relevant to the Department e.g. learners, employers and PSRBs
- Ensure that information and guidance emphasises:
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Good practice in  
developing understanding about and engagement with RPL  
should:



## Identify barriers and enablers to implementing RPL

- What are the barriers to implementing RPL at departmental and programme levels?
- What approaches can be used to help overcome the barriers?
- Who (or which groups/committees) should have responsibility for implementing such approaches?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

# Identify barriers and enablers to implementing RPL

- Barriers to implementing RPL at departmental and programme levels are clearly identified e.g.
  - Staff workload
  - Staff skills, understanding and buy-in to RPL
  - Priority for RPL at a senior departmental level
  - No RPL statements in outcome agreements
  - Funding for RPL
  - Learner understanding of RPL and academic practices.
  - Limited places on degree programmes which are over-subscribed.
  - Professional bodies don't recognise RPL.
  - Need to embrace different assessment methods.
  - Need to re-define learning outcomes.
- Enablers include:
  - Policies and processes that mainstream and integrate RPL within admissions, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and quality assurance mechanisms.
  - Clear points of contact for RPL for potential applicants, existing students and staff.
- Curriculum design that explicitly addresses flexible modes of entry, progression and delivery, linked to a wider understanding and recognition of RPL across the institution including quality assurance.
- Building staff capacity and capability in terms of providing effective forms of RPL support and appropriate forms of assessment, which is linked to initial and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and in staff workload.
- Greater use of technology-enhanced RPL provision through virtual learning environments and e-portfolios as part of a blended learning approach to support and assessment.
- Integration of RPL processes within related developments such as personal development planning (PDP), employability, work-based learning and distance learning; employer engagement strategies, widening participation and college-university articulation strategies.
- Data gathering and analysis that ensures effective monitoring, tracking and evaluation as part of a process of reviewing and enhancing RPL practice.

Good practice in  
developing understanding about and engagement with RPL  
should:



## Develop a coherent vision and communications and engagement plan for RPL

- Have a clear departmental vision and measures of success for RPL been identified?
- Have clear communications objectives and key messages for RPL been identified - targeted at internal and external stakeholder groups?
- To what degree are staff communicating the same clear key messages about RPL to different stakeholder groups?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

# Develop a coherent vision and communications and engagement plan for RPL

- A departmental vision for RPL has been developed as a collaborative departmental exercise which provides stakeholders with a clear and meaningful insight as to the departments overall long-term aims for RPL.
- A communications plan is developed as a collaborative exercise, taking the opportunity to engage all stakeholder groups with its development and using ICT where appropriate.
- Stakeholder groups are identified, representing all those who need to be engaged with developing and implementing RPL e.g.
  - Senior departmental management team.
  - Programme teams.
  - Departmental administrators.
  - Key employers and PSRBs.
  - Learners.
  - Professional support services staff.
  - Institutional staff who have roles involved with RPL e.g. registry staff, senior management.
- Measures of success for developing and implementing RPL are defined.
- Communications objectives are established for each stakeholder group.
- Key communications messages for each stakeholder group are established.
- The institutional and departmental stance, policy and process for RPL is made clear for all stakeholders.
- The various approaches and models of RPL which recognise different needs and interests of each stakeholder are made clear.
- Communications technologies are used in a blended approach with traditional communications channels. .
- The communications plan and approaches are aligned with other initiatives, departments etc.

Good practice in  
developing understanding about and engagement with RPL  
should:



## Identify learner needs and profiles for RPL

- What are the profiles of learners who could benefit from departmental programmes that incorporate RPL?
- How could such learners benefit from RPL?
- What is the market size for such learners?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

# Identify learner needs and profiles for RPL

- Potential learner profiles who could benefit from RPL are identified e.g.
  - People who have been out of the education system for a long time and/or may lack formal qualifications
  - Adults returning to education
  - Unemployed - looking for a way to demonstrate their learning to prospective employers
  - People wanting to improve upon existing qualifications
  - Those wanting to re-train or change careers
  - Students at colleges, higher education institutions (HEIs) and other learning and training providers
  - People who have taken non-formal learning or training in the workplace or through community-based learning
  - People who have gained a range of skills and knowledge through volunteering or through activities or projects within their community
  - School students who have been involved in extra-curricular activities.
- Potential benefits of RPL for learners are identified e.g.
  - increasing self-confidence and motivation for learning
  - identifying existing skills and knowledge and areas for further development
  - contribute to planning career development or a learning or training pathway
  - gaining a place on a programme without the formal qualification entry requirements
  - gaining credit within a programme or qualification in order to enter with advanced standing and shorten their period of study
  - supporting progression within their employment or career, or support a career change
  - enabling access to some postgraduate taught programmes for individuals with relevant professional experience, but without undergraduate qualifications
- The market size of learners potentially interested in RPL is estimated.

Good practice in  
developing understanding about and engagement with RPL  
should:



## Identify employer and PSRB needs and profiles for RPL

- What are the profiles of employers and PSRBs who could benefit from departmental programmes that incorporate RPL?
- How could employers and PSRBs benefit from RPL?
- What is the market size for such employers and PSRBs?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

# Identify employer and PSRB needs and profiles for RPL

- Potential employer and PSRB profiles which could benefit from RPL are identified e.g.
  - Employers which recognise the need for generation of new ideas and developments as a result of the employee/learner reflecting on work activities.
  - Employers which seek to identify employees' skills and skills gaps effectively as well as identifying appropriate training opportunities.
- Potential benefits of RPL for employers and PSRBs are identified e.g.
  - Increase employee retention
  - Reduce recruitment and training costs
  - Support workforce development planning and targeting of training/continuing professional development
  - Assist in recruitment and career advancement decisions
- Increase motivation of employees and enhancing workplace/professional practice
- Support legislative requirements for a qualified workforce.
- Can reduce the time required in employee training due to minimised duplication of learning
- Can provide increased motivation and interest in workplace activities on the part of the employee/learner
- Can generate new ideas and developments for the organisation as a result of the employee/learner reflecting on work activities.

Good practice in  
developing understanding about and engagement with RPL  
should:



Identify institutional drivers, goals, policies and priorities that will influence departmental RPL policy

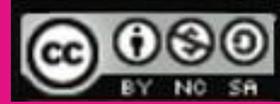
- What are the key institutional drivers, goals, policies and priorities that will influence departmental need to implement RPL?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

# Identify institutional drivers, goals, policies and priorities that will influence departmental RPL policy

- Institutional drivers, goals, policies and priorities are identified which will influence and inform departmental RPL policy and plans, e.g.
  - Recruitment and retention
  - Employer and community engagement
  - Widening participation - access to a broader range of learners
  - Student transitions (including articulation)
  - Flexible entry routes and curricula (undergraduate and postgraduate)
  - Career development planning, employability skills and graduate attributes and the hear (higher education achievement record)
  - Work-based learning, part-time and distance learning.
- League tables and public data eg NSS, KIS, student employability, external examiner
- Internationalisation and globalisation
- Business and commercial imperatives.
- Curriculum for Excellence
- Teaching, learning and assessment strategy
- Technology-enhanced/ blended/online learning
- Learner engagement
- Continual enhancement to curriculum development e.g. to support WBL
- Quality assurance and enhancement and QAA audits.
- Sustainable development
- Learner extra-curricular activities and accreditation reports

Good practice in  
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision  
should:



## Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance

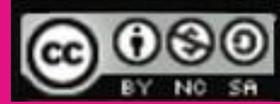
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**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance

- Applicants are provided with a full understanding of each of the three stages of the RPL process:
  - Advice and guidance
  - Support
  - Recognition / assessment
- The applicant is provided with key points of contact for reliable and frequent advice and guidance.
- Preliminary information and guidance on RPL and RPiL is be provided, including:
  - RPL principles
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  - Costs
- The advice and guidance ensures that applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process.
- The advice and guidance addresses likely questions from applicants:
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- Advice and guidance is reinforced in written or electronic form as well as through discussion and is clear, accurate and accessible.

Good practice in  
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## Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 2: support

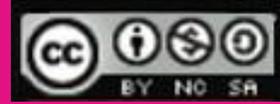
- To what extent are students provided with support to enable them to complete the RPL process and help them to understand their own learning and how it relates to the programme they are applying to gain credit for?
- To what extent is agreement reached between student, assessor and advisor on the mechanisms by which the claim is to be assessed?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 2: support

- Support is provided to students to enable them to:
  - complete the RPL process
  - help them to understand their own learning and
  - how it relates to the programme they are applying to gain credit for.
- Subject specific support for RPiL includes:
  - Advising if the learning from experience is likely to be at the appropriate SCQF level
  - Clarifying programme/module learning outcomes and/or agreeing the student's own learning outcomes
  - Advising on the mechanism for providing evidence of learning and criteria for assessment
  - Advising on which types of evidence are appropriate to the learning outcomes
  - Advising on how to relate the learning from experience and current theory
  - Advising on the level of analysis required in the submission
  - Providing feedback on drafts (where appropriate).
- Support protocols and boundaries are made explicit e.g. time allocation, availability and responsiveness of staff.
- Advice is provided on:
  - Mechanisms for evidence of learning.
  - Interpreting 'academic jargon'.
  - Actual fees e.g. for credit transfer, support, assessment (and there is transparency in the method for calculating fees).
  - Assessment criteria (e.g. acceptability, sufficiency, authenticity, currency).
- Agreement is reached between student, assessor and advisor on mechanisms by which the claim is to be assessed.
- Support for RPiL includes:
  - Encouraging reflection
  - Helping to identify sources of learning
  - Helping with the selection or development of learning outcomes
  - Advising on the mechanism for providing evidence of learning
  - Helping to identify evidence of learning
  - Providing feedback on the presentation of the submission.

Good practice in  
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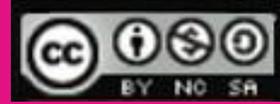
## Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 3: recognition / assessment

- To what extent is the role of the assessor clearly identified with key processes defined.

# Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 3: recognition / assessment

- The stage of recognition/assessment addresses some, or all, of the following processes:
  - Credit transfer claims
  - Determining level of credit for RPL claims (acceptability/currency)
  - Determining volume of credit for RPL claims (sufficiency) e.g. the amount of time required by the 'average' learner, at a particular level, to achieve the outcomes claimed.
  - Evaluating evidence of prior credit (authenticity/currency)
  - Avoidance of double counting of credit in credit transfer claims
  - The use and re-use of credit
  - Recording the award of credit
  - Recognition of Prior informal Learning (RPIIL):
    - Assessing the RPiL claim
  - Module claims
  - Claims for entry at an advanced level within an award
  - Avoidance of double counting of credit in RPiL claims

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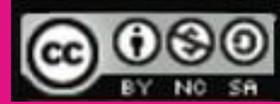
## Establish clear roles and responsibilities for RPL

- To what extent have clear roles and responsibilities for RPL been established within the department?
- Have staff been assigned to roles?

# Establish clear roles and responsibilities for RPL

- RPL Advisor (mentor) role responsibilities include:
  - Providing initial guidance on the RPL process and liaising with the RPL Assessor on the claim (e.g. viability, nature, evidence required and type of assessment).
  - Liaising with the RPL Administrator on the process of the RPL claim.
  - Providing guidance on the gathering and presenting of evidence of learning (including academic jargon).
  - Facilitating opportunities for the applicant's further learning and development.
  - Supporting applicants in the reflective process, for identifying learning through experience.
  - Providing unbiased constructive criticism, guidance and feedback.
- RPL Assessor role responsibilities include:
  - Assessing RPL claims and making recommendations.
  - Identifying and mitigating risks that might affect the quality of assessment.
- RPL Co-ordinator role responsibilities include:
  - Coordinating and monitoring RPL process at departmental level.
  - Providing the department with information and advice relating to RPL policy and procedures.
- Programme leader responsibilities include:
  - Managing the processing of RPL claims made by students post-entry, in liaison with the RPL Coordinator and RPL Advisor and RPL Assessor as appropriate.
- RPL administrator responsibilities include:
  - Providing advice and guidance on and co-ordinating RPL processes and signatures.
  - Monitoring and recording of RPL claims.
- Assessment board responsibilities include:
  - Considers and approves RPiL claims for credit, as well as post-entry credit transfer claims as appropriate.

Good practice in  
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## Develop processes for monitoring, review, research, quality-assuring and enhancing RPL

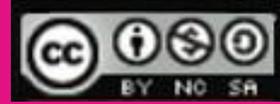
- To what extent are processes and systems for monitoring, reviewing and quality assuring RPL embedded into normal programme, departmental and institutional processes and systems?
- To what extent are RPL enhancement activities aligned with normal programme enhancement practices?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Develop processes for monitoring, review, research, quality-assuring and enhancing RPL

- The process for monitoring the operation of the RPL procedures is clearly described and in line with the requirements of the Programme Monitoring Process, including RPL data in the Annual Programme Analysis.
- RPL constitutes an academic procedure which follows the institutional assessment procedures and general quality assurance procedures for the programme.
- RPL data is audited and is part of QA processes.
- Monitoring the use and impact of the RPL process includes:
  - recording the number of learners undertaking RPL
  - monitoring the progression of RPL
  - monitoring the success rate of RPL claims
  - student experience
  - staff experience
- Data is captured coherently and used for data/learner analytics and quality assurance.
- The policy, procedures and process of RPL are subject to periodic review and evaluation, informed by quantitative and qualitative evidence, in order to enhance practice.
- Improved data capture and analysis is set in the context of integrated student management information systems.
- Alignment between RPL (design and implementation), QA processes and Quality Code indicators is made explicit.
- Programme teams ensure data is collected in line with institutional/departmental data collection, monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- The department engages in continual RPL innovation, change and research, including the use of technologies to support RPL, such as e-portfolios.
- "Students as partners/change agents" approaches are encouraged to support RPL enhancement.

Good practice in  
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision  
should:



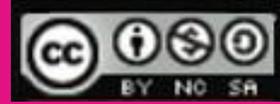
## Guide, develop and support staff

- Have staff capabilities and experience to engage with RPL been defined?
- Are staff adequately trained, supported and resourced to undertake RPL activities?
- To what extent are staff equipped to use key RPL technologies such as e-portfolios?

# Guide, develop and support staff

- In order to carry out their roles effectively, staff involved in supporting and assessing RPiL claims:
  - have their key capabilities and necessary experience specified.
  - are appropriately trained and supported
  - are adequately resourced
- Training and support for staff involved in RPiL support and assessment is provided through induction programmes, training and continuing professional development (CPD), including:
  - Reflective/RPL practitioner modules are included as part of induction and CPD programmes.
  - Institutional/sector workshops.
  - Communities of practice for peer support and RPL knowledge building - institutional and inter-institutional.
- Particular emphasis for staff development is placed on effective practice in use of e-portfolios to support RPL processes.
- Staff have access to a range of resources to help them to self-review and develop their digital literacy e.g. online diagnostics tools, e-learning resources.
- Communities of practice adopt effective practice approaches e.g.
  - Appropriate facilitation.
  - Members offer peer support e.g. for addressing issues.
  - Engage the full range of stakeholders involved in RPL e.g. RPL advisors, RPL assessors, RPL co-ordinators, RPL administrators, students, employers, PSRBs.
  - Activity-based e.g. develop and build knowledge-bases of effective practices (e.g. via a wiki); themed discussions.
- Staff digital literacy is developed which incorporates:
  - technical aspects of use of technology
  - effective practice in designing and delivering pedagogically sound blended learning for RPL and flexible provision.
  - effective practices in using information and communications technologies to support RPL and flexible learning e.g. web-conferencing, podcasting, tablets, smartphones, multimedia devices.

Good practice in  
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision  
should:



## Adopt flexible, transparent and business-like approaches to RPL provision

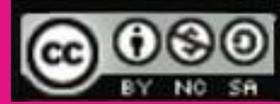
- To what extent is RPL being developed and implemented in business, like, transparent and streamlined ways?
- To what extent do RPL does the departmental staff workload model and business plan incorporate time and resource for staff to engage with RPL? .
- To what extent do RPL policies, processes and practice conform to relevant laws, codes and institutional policies?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Adopt flexible, transparent and business-like approaches to RPL provision

- RPL support and assessment activity is explicitly included in the departmental staff workload model and business plan.
- The mechanisms for supporting and assessing RPL claims are fully documented and readily available to appropriate staff within departments, as well as to potential candidates.
- The fees, fee structure and cost model for RPL are established and the mechanisms for calculating them and what is/is not included are made transparent.
- The costs/benefits of using technology tools are broadly identified.
- The RPL system supports the awarding of specific credit at an appropriate level towards or within particular programmes and discourages claims for general credit with no clear academic goal.
- Appeals and complaints procedures are clearly defined.
- RPL is a standing item on Programme Boards and proposed RPiL claims are discussed and considered by the relevant Programme Board prior to submission.
- Streamlined approaches to support and evidence-gathering are used to ensure the process is accessible to learners and more resource-efficient for staff without undermining the integrity of the process or the outcome.
- Professional market research is undertaken (and resourced) to identify needs and demands for RPL from learners, employers and PSRBs.
- Protocols of engagement for learners and staff are specified to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, codes and policies e.g.
  - Data protection
  - Data security and protection
  - Privacy, equality ethics and diversity.
  - Digital identify
  - Intellectual property (IPR) - copyright, protection and licensing.
  - Freedom of Information.

Good practice in  
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision  
should:



## Develop partnership working

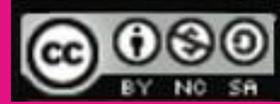
- To what extent does the programme meet the needs of a broader range of employers cost-effectively by working with PSRBs to align flexible curricula and RPL with lifelong learning, CPD, workforce development and professional recognition?
- To what extent can programmes engage more effectively with SMEs by working with PSRBs?
- To what extent has the programme team engaged with colleges to identify opportunities and barriers relating to RPL?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Develop partnership working

- The programme team engage and collaborate with employers and PSRBs to:
  - Align programmes with lifelong learning, CPD, work-force planning and recognition agendas.
  - Bring parity of informal/non-formal learning with formal learning.
  - Translate non-formal and informal learning into tangible strategies that make learning through these means visible, appreciated and recognised as comparable with, and integral to, the development of a professional.
  - Establish ways in which qualification frameworks can validate PSRBs credentials and ensure quality assurance by making progression routes transparent and coherent.
  - Establish RPL as an acknowledgment of achievement to motivate PSRB members to enter or gain partial credit towards academic programmes, and where relevant elevate membership status to graduate and/or postgraduate levels.
- Encourage PSRBs to communicate the benefits of RPL to its members.
- Explore how RPL can support legislative requirements for a qualified workforce.
- Curricula are aligned with sector, professional and/or employer body/consortia needs e.g. defined key skills, capabilities, awards and learning outcomes.
- The programme team engage and collaborate with colleges to identify opportunities for supporting RPL developments.

## Good practice in departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision should:



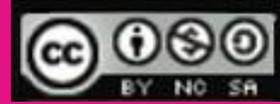
### Specify principles for adoption and good practices in use of technology tools to support RPL processes

- To what extent are technology tools used to support more efficient RPL processes.
- To what extent are e-portfolios used to their full capabilities and good practices to support RPL processes?
- To what extent have staff undertaken professional development and training programmes relating to digital literacies?

# Specify principles for adoption and good practices in use of technology tools to support RPL processes

- A blended learning approach to support and assessment is adopted with greater use of technology-enhanced RPL provision.
- E-portfolios are actively driven by staff in a range of uses that extend much further than the traditional written portfolio e.g.
  - They are used as a core component of the formative learner planning, reflection, dialogue/feedback and support process.
  - They are used as a core medium for communications and engagement between all stakeholders involved in an RPL claim e.g. learners, advisors (mentors), assessors, academic staff, administrator staff, employers.
  - Learners use e-portfolios to record, store and showcase all evidence (in all media) in relation to their RPL claim including e.g. work-based artefacts.
- E-portfolios are owned by learners
- Online survey tools are used to support evaluation of the learner experience.
- Prepare learners for using technology.
- Learners are encouraged to produce and collect evidence in many media e.g. audio, video, oral presentations, screencasts etc. using e.g. mobile devices such as SmartPhones, Tablets, digital cameras and video cameras in addition to desktop/laptop devices.
- Advisors should ensure that learners are fully aware of, understand, have access to and have the skills to use a range of technologies such as e-portfolios and mobile devices and direct them to appropriate diagnostics, development and support resources/staff.
- Staff use different media to provide feedback to students e.g. through podcasts.
- Core data about learners and their progression through the various stages of an RPL claim is recorded for later synthesis and evaluation.

Good practice in  
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision  
should:



## Develop a departmental implementation plan for RPL

- Has a departmental implementation plan for RPL been developed which creates the environment for and facilitates programme teams in incorporating RPL into curricula?
- To what extent have all barriers to implementation of RPL been addressed?
- Have specific programmes been prioritised for developing RPL?

# Develop a departmental implementation plan for RPL

- A departmental implementation plan is developed for RPL, incorporating:
  - Key RPL processes – three stages
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Monitoring, review, research and quality assurance/enhancement
  - Staff development and support to guide, support and assess RPL claims
  - Guidelines for programme teams
    - RPL guiding principles
    - Approaches to integrating RPL into curricula
    - RPL to shape curriculum design for more flexible provision
    - Alignment with other priority areas
  - Assessment framework
    - Key assessment practice points
    - Assessment methods
  - Partnerships
  - Use of technology to support RPL
  - Business approaches to RPL
  - Range and scope of programmes for which RPL will apply
  - Joined-up working within the institution
- The range and scope of programmes for which RPL will apply is defined, prioritising which programmes should be initially targeted.
- Actions to address other barriers to the implementation of RPL in the department are developed (e.g. those identified in the departmental vision, communications and engagement plan).

## Good practice in implementing RPL in programmes should:



Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together with core principles and staff responsibilities for RPL

- To what extent have the needs, drivers and priorities for RPL in the programme been established?
- To what extent has the programme team reviewed the Departmental Vision & Communications plan and the RPL departmental implementation plan and contextualised them for the programme?
- To what extent does the programme adopt guiding principles for RPL?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together with core principles and staff responsibilities for RPL

- The departmental vision and communications plan is contextualised for the programme in order to establish the following:
  - Learner needs, profiles and priorities for RPL
  - Employer and PSRB needs, profiles and priorities for RPL
  - Institutional drivers, goals, policies including alignment with institutional and departmental priorities
- The programme identifies how RPL will be used i.e.
  - RPL for admission to a programme of study
  - RPL for entry with advanced standing
  - RPL that leads to an award
  - RPL as a formative experience to help students gain confidence and develop academic skills
- The programme team adopt and contextualise the institutional/ departmental RPL processes.
- The maximum number of credits for RPL is established.
- Credit gained through informal and experiential learning has equal value to that gained through formal learning, ie parity of esteem.
- Alignment between RPL (design and implementation), QA processes and Quality Code indicators is made explicit.
- The programme adopts clear and explicit principles for RPL design and implementation.
  - learner focused
  - accessible
  - flexible
  - reliable, transparent and consistent
  - quality assured.
- The programme team assigns staff to roles (with key responsibilities) that have been identified in the Departmental plan e.g.
  - RPL Administrator.
  - RPL Advisor (mentor).
  - RPL Assessor.

Good practice in  
implementing RPL in programmes  
should:



## Review how RPL can integrate into curricula at design/review stage

- How can RPL be integrated into curricula to ensure parity of informal/non-formal learning with formal learning?
- To what extent should RPL be fully integrated into curriculum design rather than as a "bolt-on" to curriculum delivery?
- To what extent can RPL support the design of more flexible provision e.g. work-based learning, part-time provision?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Review how RPL can integrate into curricula at design/review stage

- Programme design explicitly addresses flexible modes of entry, progression and delivery, linked to a wider understanding and recognition of RPL across the institution including quality assurance.
- Use of programme level outcomes or SCQF level descriptors rather than module level learning outcomes is made to enable an easier comparison between the outcomes the curriculum seeks to achieve in terms of capacity and competence and those demonstrated through personal or professional experiences
- Learning outcomes facilitate a range of different routes for their achievement which link into delivery and assessment methods.
- Programme design enables students to build on the range of competencies and knowledge gained through work-based and other experience which learners bring to the curriculum.
- RPL is integrated within work-based learning programmes, forming an intrinsic part of the planning and evidence-gathering process, rather than viewed as a discrete activity before the programme commences.
- Links between RPL and educational or personal and professional development planning are made explicit.
- Employability skills and graduate attributes are made explicit through validation processes and module/programme learning outcomes and are explicitly linked to RPL.
- Competencies from employers and professional bodies are mapped to learning outcomes and links to RPL are made explicit.
- Flexible entry routes and alternative routes to credit, whether through RPL, credit transfer, articulation, or work-based learning, are addressed at the point of programme design rather than programme delivery.
- RPL is used with employees in the workplace to support more flexible, part-time provision as part of regional and national workforce development agendas.
- Programme design is aligned with how learners learn in the workplace.
- RPL (as noted by the SCQF) is a gateway rather than a barrier to learning.
- RPL promotes the positive aspects of an individual's learning experience, not its deficiency.

Good practice in  
implementing RPL in programmes  
should:



## Use RPL to shape curriculum design for more flexible provision

- To what extent do curricula offer learners flexibility in learning pathways, learning approaches and choice in topics of study and assessment approaches?
- To what extent do curricula offer greater customisation to learner needs through more flexible pedagogic and assessment approaches e.g. curricula based around specific values and processes?
- To what extent do curricula incorporate the academic, personal and professional development of learners throughout a programme?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Use RPL to shape curriculum design for more flexible provision

The QAA Flexible Curricula toolkit is used to support:

- The design of more flexible provision and pathways through RPL, articulation and credit transfer.
- Curricula design is based around specific values and processes rather than specific content and activities, allowing learning to be customised to suit learner and learner cohort needs.
- Programmes provide choice about topics of study, orientation (e.g. theoretical, practical, vocational) and learning pathways to defined learning outcomes.
- Approaches such as inquiry-based learning, coaching and reflective practice form core elements of negotiated curricula design.
- Cross-institutional frameworks (e.g. re-purposing modules from other faculties, departments, courses) to maximise use of modules of learning.
- Highly modular curricula are designed which can be flexibly recombined to suit the personal needs and interests of learners, ('pick and mix' approach).
- PDP (Personalised Development Planning) is a key element of programmes for each learner.
- E-portfolios are used by learners, tutors & mentors to support academic, professional and personal development.
- Assessment criteria and methods are negotiable with flexibility in completion routes.

Good practice in  
implementing RPL in programmes  
should:



## Design simple RPL assessment frameworks

- To what extent can assessment frameworks be designed to enable easy comparisons between assessment of informal/non-formal learning and formal learning?
- To what extent can assessment be linked to work-based learning and working practices?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Design simple RPL assessment frameworks

- Assessments are appropriate to the nature and outcomes of informal learning, while still ensuring integrity of the process and outcome.
- Assessments are mapped against programme level outcomes or SCQF level descriptors for large amounts of credit rather than against programme modules.
- Greater use of level descriptors are made to enable the articulation of prior informal learning in learning outcomes to enable an easier comparison between the outcomes in terms of capacity and competence and those demonstrated through personal or professional experiences.
- Greater use of existing workplace learning and working practices in evaluation and assessment is made as part of work-based learning programmes.
- Comparability, currency and authenticity of learning are essential criteria in assessing RPL claims.
- Key assessment criteria are established e.g.
  - **Acceptability:** Is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning outcomes being demonstrated; is the evidence reliable and valid?
  - **Sufficiency:** Is there a sufficient breadth and depth of evidence, including evidence of reflection, to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes or competences claimed?
  - **Authenticity:** Is the evidence clearly the outcome of the learner's own effort?
  - **Currency:** Is what is being assessed current learning? Does the learner need to provide evidence of having kept the learning up-to-date, if the learning experience occurred some time ago?

Good practice in  
implementing RPL in programmes  
should:



## Consider alternative assessment methods

What are the range of assessment methods that can support both informal/non-formal learning and formal learning?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Consider alternative assessment methods

- Assessment methods can include:
  - Written or e-portfolio
  - Mapping against programme level outcomes or SCQF level descriptors for large amounts of credit rather than against programme modules.
  - Greater use of level descriptors to enable the articulation of prior informal learning in learning outcomes that are more relevant to this type of learning.
  - Reflective account
  - Workplace-derived artefacts
  - Structured interviewing as a single evidence source
  - Use of technologies e.g. web/video-conferencing, video and podcasts
  - Greater use of existing workplace learning practices in evaluation and assessment, particularly as part of work-based learning programmes.
  - Simulation / observation of practice
  - Employer reference/evidence
  - Project work
  - Existing work-based learning practices
  - Record of volunteer learning and experience
  - 'Assessment on demand' such as exam or assignment

Good practice in  
implementing RPL in programmes  
should:



## Adopt technology tools and good practices in their use to support RPL processes

- To what extent are technology tools used to support more efficient RPL processes.
- To what extent are e-portfolios used to their full capabilities and good practices to support RPL processes?
- To what extent have staff undertaken professional development and training programmes relating to digital literacies?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Adopt technology tools and good practices in their use to support RPL processes

- A blended learning approach to support and assessment is adopted with greater use of technology-enhanced RPL provision.
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  - They are used as a core component of the formative learner planning, reflection, dialogue/feedback and support process.
  - They are used as a core medium for communications and engagement between all stakeholders involved in an RPL claim e.g. learners, advisors (mentors), assessors, academic staff, administrator staff, employers.
  - Learners use e-portfolios to record, store and showcase all evidence (in all media) in relation to their RPL claim including e.g. work-based artefacts.
  - E-portfolios are owned by learners
- Learners are encouraged to produce and collect evidence in many media e.g. audio, video, oral presentations, screencasts etc. using e.g. mobile devices such as SmartPhones, Tablets, digital cameras and video cameras in addition to desktop/laptop devices.
- Advisors ensure that learners are fully aware of, understand, have access to and have the skills to use a range of technologies such as e-portfolios and mobile devices and direct them to appropriate diagnostics, development and support resources/staff.
- Staff use different media to provide feedback to students e.g. through podcasts.
- Core data about learners and their progression through the various stages of an RPL claim is recorded for later synthesis and evaluation.
- Online survey tools are used to support evaluation of the learner experience.
- Learners are informed about their electronic HEAR system and how RPL can contribute to it.

Good practice in  
implementing RPL in programmes  
should:



## Develop a programme action plan for RPL

- To what extent are technology tools used to support more efficient RPL processes.
- To what extent are e-portfolios used to their full capabilities and good practices to support RPL processes?
- To what extent have staff undertaken professional development and training programmes relating to digital literacies?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Develop a programme action plan for RPL

A programme action plan for RPL is developed incorporating:

- Needs and demands for RPL - learners, employers and PSRBs.
- Institutional and departmental drivers, goals and priority areas relevant to the programme.
- Guiding principles for RPL in the programme.
- Assignment of staff to RPL roles with designated responsibilities
- Integrating RPL into curricula
- RPL to shape curriculum design for more flexible provision
- Assessment framework
- Use of technology tools and good practices to support RPL processes
- Learner support
- Partnership working
- Preparing learners for e-learning, e-working and further study

## Good practice in implementing RPL in programmes should:



# Provide information and guidance for learners

- To what extent do learners have access to clear information and guidance on RPL?
- To what extent do learners have access to appropriate technologies?
- To what extent do learners know how to use technologies effectively e.g. e-portfolios and mobile devices?

# Provide information and guidance for learners

- Learners are provided with clear information and guidance on all three phases of the RPL process.
- Programme specific guidance is provided using the materials provided with this toolkit together with institutional/departmental materials.
- Information and guidance incorporates:
  - What does RPL mean?
  - What can you benefit from RPL?
  - What support will you get?
  - How long will it take?
  - Who is the RPL Advisor?
  - How much will it cost?
- Guidance is provided on what technologies learners will require to have access to and how to set them.
- Guidance is provided on what digital skills are required, together with sign-posting to institutional resources to help learners to self-assess and develop their digital skills.
- If e-portfolios are used, specific guidance is provided to learners to help them use the full functionality.
- Guidance is provided on using mobile devices to help learners to capture audio and video and upload to their e-portfolio.
- If web-conferencing is to be used, specific guidance on effective use is provided.

## Good practice in implementing RPL in programmes should:



# Provide appropriate support for learners

- Do learners understand informal and non-formal learning and how they can be assessed and validated.
- Do learners believe that informal and non-formal learning is inferior to formal learning and accreditation?
- Do learners appreciate the benefits of formal and informal learning?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

# Provide appropriate support for learners

- In relation to stage 1 of the RPL process - advice and guidance - applicants are provided with clear points of contact in relation to RPL processes and subject-specialist queries.
- In relation to stage 2 of the RPL process - support - learners are provided with:
  - Support to enable them to:
    - complete the RPL process
    - help them to understand their own learning and how it relates to the programme they are applying to gain credit for.
  - Support for RPiL focusing on:
    - Encouraging reflection
    - Helping to identify sources of learning
    - Helping with the selection or development of learning outcomes
    - Advising on the mechanism for providing evidence of learning
    - Helping to identify evidence of learning
    - Providing feedback on the presentation of the submission.
- Subject specific support for RPiL that focuses on:
  - Advising if the learning from experience is likely to be at the appropriate SCQF level
  - Clarifying programme/module learning outcomes and/or agreeing the student's own learning outcomes
  - Advising on how to relate the learning from experience and current theory
  - Advising on the level of analysis required in the submission
  - Providing feedback on drafts (where appropriate).
- Advice on criteria for assessment (e.g. acceptability, sufficiency, authenticity, currency)
- Advice on which types of evidence are appropriate to the learning outcomes (e.g. those on Viewpoints card C1-5 "Consider alternative assessment methods")
- Interpreting 'academic jargon'.
- Actual fees e.g. for credit transfer, support, assessment (and there is transparency in the method for calculating fees)