RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PROCEDURE

(FULL-TIME PROVISION)

Division	Further Education and Training
Policy Area	Quality Assurance: Assessment Policy
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Revision Details	Inclusion of English language requirements for RPL in line with Access, Transfer & Progression Policy
Monitored	Ongoing
Responsibility	Quality Council
Review Date	To be updated in line with other College of FET policy and procedure updates.
This procedure document is an uncontrolled copy. Each staff member should consult StaffCONNECT for the latest version of this document.	

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2. Definitions

2.1. Glossary

CAS	Common Awards System	CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework	FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FET	Further Education and Training	NARIC	National Academic Recognition Awards Centre
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications	QBS	QQI Business System
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certified Learning	QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning	HEI	Higher Education Institution
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning	ATP	Access, Transfer & Progression

2.2. Credit

Credit, in terms of recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL) (i.e., learning which has not previously been academically accredited) may be granted where there is evidence that the required learning outcomes have been achieved. Where such evidence exists, applicants may be entitled to advanced entry to a programme and/or awarded marks/grades for the learning.

2.3. Exemption

Exemptions exist where applicants 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 applicants advanced entry to a programme and/or may be used for the achievement of the overall award.

2.4. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL allows learning that has taken place in all areas of life to be formally validated. In other words, previous life experiences can lead to a formal qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). RPL gives **value** to all previous **relevant** learning, no matter where or how this learning has occurred.

For the purpose of this document, the following definition of RPL will apply: *'RPL incorporates prior formal, informal and non-formal learning and that which is validated within the context of a specified destination award from level one to [six] on the National Framework of Qualifications'* (European Commission, CEDEFOP, ICF International; 2014 p. 3).

CEDEFOP (2011, p.7) provides the following definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning:

Formal Learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the applicant's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.
Non-formal Learning	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the applicant's point of view.
Informal Learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the applicant's perspective.

RPL in Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board involves awarding the RPL applicant recognition in the form of access or advanced entry to a programme, credits within a programme, exemption(s) from element(s) of a programme, or a full award. **An individual cannot claim RPL based on the completion of an element of a module.**

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board shall ensure that all applicants are made aware of the potential benefits of RPL. Appropriate supports relating to portfolio preparation shall be made available within Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board to eligible applicants.

RPL can be subdivided into Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) and an application for RPL can be RPCL, RPEL or a combination of both.

Please Note: Availability of resources to support an RPL applicant may have an impact on how soon an application for RPL can commence after the initial RPL enquiry has been submitted.

2.5.   Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body (such as QQI) or other recognised universities, colleges/institutes. Prior certified learning can also include qualifications awarded by bodies abroad, such as, for example, the City & Guilds of London Institute: see Section 4.7 QQI (Foreign and UK Qualifications).

Prior certified learning may entitle the applicant to access to a programme or exemptions from part of a programme (but not credits). As this certified learning has already been awarded credit, the applicant does not receive credits for it again, but recognition in the form of exemptions.

Exemptions are grade neutral and do not contribute to the overall calculation of the grade of the major award. The RPL applicant must be made aware of this.

Exemptions may also be granted where an applicant has completed elements of an award elsewhere, for example, component(s) completed in another ETB, and has transferred into a programme in Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. This also applies to transfers to other programmes within Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board itself, for example, a learner transferring from a Level 5 Healthcare programme to a Level 5 Childcare one. The QQI Business System (QBS) automatically captures credits for all such previously completed CAS awards.

2.6. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) (non-accredited learning) is non-formal and informal learning acquired through life or work experience. It can also be in the form of learning achieved from non-accredited bodies, or from certifying bodies outside of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This type of learning has not been previously linked to an award on the NFQ.

RPEL may entitle the applicant to **access** to a programme (non-standard entry, such as not having a Leaving Cert), **advanced entry** (which is essentially an exemption from part of a programme, e.g., apprenticeship model) or **certification** (where RPEL is used to fully certify an applicant for a module(s) or a Major Award).

Important Reminder: **RPL cannot be partially used within a module.**

2.7. RPL Applicant

The RPL applicant is the individual who is seeking recognition of their prior learning, either RPEL, RPCL, **or a combination of both**. From completing an initial application process to submission of the final portfolio of evidence, the individual is *applying* for recognition and validation, hence they are referred to as an RPL applicant and not a learner (although informally that language may still be used).

2.8. RPL Mentor

The RPL mentor is the RPL practitioner who is assigned to an individual RPL applicant to support and guide them through the RPL process.

2.9. RPL Assessor

The RPL assessor is a suitably qualified subject matter expert who will fairly and consistently grade the RPL portfolio of evidence in accordance with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's assessment policies and procedures.

3. Principles of Assessment in Relation to 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, Revised 2018, p.5).

Central to quality assured assessment is the assumption that applicants 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, Revised 2018, principles of assessment.

3.1 Principles of Assessment

3.1.1 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)
- Applicants 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

3.1.2 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
- Applicant evidence is reliable
- Results are consistent over time across various assessors, contexts, conditions and applicants

3.1.3 Fairness

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

3.1.4   Quality

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

3.1.5   Transparency

Transparency in assessment ensures that assessment policies and processes provide clarity to all relevant stakeholders.

3.2 Principles of Assessment and RPL

As stated above, the QQI Principles of Assessment apply to this document, and to RPL. Along with these principles, RPL evidence (materials which provide support of an applicant's claim of learning they have previously acquired) should also be:

- **Authentic:** the RPL mentor must be satisfied that the evidence is the applicant's own work and is based on real-life experiences (work life, home life, leisure activities, community work, volunteering, involvement in sports, etc.)
- **Relevant:** the evidence presented must be linked to the learning outcomes of the award being sought
- **Current:** the applicant must still possess the skills and knowledge claimed (see Table 1: Considerations for RPCL)
- **Sufficient:** enough evidence must be provided to satisfy the requirements of the learning outcomes and the standard of the award.

3.3 Legislative Context

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 sets out the statutory basis for QQI's engagement with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), mainly by establishing policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression for providers (QQI, 2017).

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board is responsible for having a consistent approach to RPL and implementation must be in accordance with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's Access, Transfer & Progression Policy[1].

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's Quality Assurance System overarches these principles and ensures applicant achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent manner in line with the award standard.

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[1] https://collegeoffet.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/23_06_20_College_of_FET_Access_Transfer_Progression_Policy_V1.1.pdf

3.3.1 FET Division Strategic Framework 2022 – 2025

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division Strategic Framework 2022 – 2025 ([Framework | College of FET](#)), in line with the national SOLAS FET Strategic Framework 2020 – 2024[2], defines our purpose around Building Skills, Fostering Inclusion and Creating Pathways.

The Framework outlines five key enabling priorities for Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's FET Division with *Priority 1* being:

1. **Learner-Centred Approach**

1.1. Simplify FET pathways, and work collaboratively with key stakeholders to find solutions to address barriers to learner access and progression.

1.2. Improve learners' participation and transitions through integrated, consistent wrap-around assessments and supports throughout their learning journey.

1.3. Raise awareness on the availability of quality information and guidance supports for all FET learners, to ensure they are in the right place, and make informed choices on their learning journey.

1.4. Enhance our learner-centred approach to communication and marketing, with locally-focused marketing campaigns, and improved learner interface with the FET website.

1.7 Continue to develop mechanisms to recognise prior learning and certify experiential learning.

This is about recognising that each learner is unique and bring their own circumstances, strengths, needs, skills, past experiences and aspirations when they join FET. Our priority is to do right by all our learners. Placing learners at the centre of everything we do means listening to their perspectives to enhance the teaching and learning environments and outcomes, respond to their needs, and empower them to fulfil their potential.

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[2] solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf

4. RPL Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. The Provision Co-ordinator

The Provision Co-ordinator must ensure that all staff and applicants are made aware of:

- the existence of an RPL Procedure and RPL requirements including English language requirements
- the potential benefits of RPL
- the appropriate support relating to portfolio preparation
- the appropriate support relating to mapping of learning outcomes to award
- standards
- the fact that the availability of resources to support an RPL applicant may have an impact on how soon an application for RPL can commence after the initial RPL enquiry has been submitted.

The Provision Co-ordinator must inform the applicant of the outcome of the RPL screening process and where the initial screening is successful, assign an RPL mentor to the applicant. The Provision Co-ordinator will also be responsible for assigning the RPL assessor(s) as appropriate.

The Provision Co-ordinator must also submit any appeals application to the External Appeals Office and inform the applicant of the outcome of the appeals application (see Section 8: RPL Appeals).

Programme Governance: RPL applies to all Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's validated programmes from levels 1-6 on the NFQ[3], however, not all Campuses in the ETB are approved to deliver all awards at all levels, and this has implications for PLSS and QBS. In order to keep RPL certifications under the QA structures of Programme Governance, a MS Form has been developed to enable certification via RPL for all of the ETB's programmes of education and training for all Campuses.

The Provision Co-ordinator (or designated person) must complete the MS Form [Application to use a Module and/or Major Award for the Purposes of RPL Certification](#) if an RPL application is being sought for a Programme Module(s) and/or Programme (Major Award) for which their Campus isn't currently approved to deliver.

This form does not confer approval to deliver the Programme Modules(s) or Programme (Major Award) as part of a **taught** programme but for the purposes of RPL only.

The QA Support Service will use the details in submitted forms to have the relevant awards added to the Campus's list of approved awards by QQI so that they are available on the QBS when submitting results.

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[3] Some validated programmes have their own specific RPL procedures and processes built into the programme and where this is the case then it is this programme specific RPL process that must be followed, e.g., The National Hairdressing Apprenticeship and the Early Learning and Care programmes.

4.2. The RPL Applicant

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

RPCL for Access: In the case of RPCL for access, an applicant's certified learning will support access to an award at the same or next level (one level lower or one level higher) on the NFQ. In accordance with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's RPL processes, applicants may be required to participate in a suitability interview as part of the non-standard entry process. This will be managed by the Provision.

RPCL for Non-CAS Exemptions: It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for the exemption(s). Applicants must request exemption(s) from their Provision Co-ordinator within a reasonable timeframe, recommended ten (10) working days of the module[4] commencement. Applicants 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. Provision Co-ordinators (or designated persons) will liaise with the QA Support Service on all exemptions.

QQI provide a list of exemptions [exemptions.pdf (qqi.ie)](exemptions.pdf) that are **the only non-CAS exemptions** that can be submitted by a Provider on behalf of an applicant.

The following conditions apply:
- Completion of due diligence checks to ensure that the previous qualification is genuine
- Only awards which are no more than five years old, may be used to claim an exemption
- Only when the learner is in a position to achieve a major CAS award can the relevant exemption(s) be submitted for certification
- Where a learner holding an award that is not on this published list seeks recognition of that award from a provider, the provider must use RPL. (QQI, 2021)

Important Note: All QQI **CAS award credits** are automatically combined to make up the credits of the Major Award under which the learner's results have been entered. The *five-year rule* does not apply here and as long as an award is still active, then the credits will automatically be counted by the QBS towards the Major Award unless they have been previously used within another Major Award. In this case, the credits won't be counted, and the module(s) will be grade neutral in the calculation of the Major Award grade (see Section 6.2.1).

For all RPCL applications: RPL applicants should include, where applicable, original certificates, results, programme details and/or, where possible, learning outcomes of certified modules completed (these must be translated into English by a recognised translating service if they are in a language other than English). Applicants will be supported in this by a designated person from the FET Campus.

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[4] An applicant may be entitled (based on fulfilling explicit criteria) to enter into Stage 2 of a 3-Stage programme, for example, the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship. See RPL Handbook for Advanced Entry for the National Hairdressing Apprenticeship for more information.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for RPEL. Applicants should make contact with the ETB via the IRGSS contact details on www.collegeofFET.ie (website link for RPL-specific enquiries to be developed) which will be screened for suitability by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. Once deemed eligible, applicants will be assigned an RPL Mentor (see Section 7, RPEL Process).

It is the applicant's responsibility to gather and present the evidence required for assessment according to the instructions given by the RPL Mentor. Evidence may include, but is not limited to: CV, references, certificates or testimonials, products or samples, job descriptions and/or evaluations, evidence of attendance at training courses or workplace assessments. Evidence for assessment may be presented in a portfolio of evidence and mapped to the requirements of the award for which the recognition is being sought.

English Language Requirement: *Important Information for International Learners whose mother tongue is not English:*

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's College of FET policy on Access, Transfer & Progression states that in the College of FET all programmes/courses, are delivered through the medium of English[5] and as such, English language entry requirements are in place for all programmes of study at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). All applicants, whose first language is not English[6] and who have not been educated through the medium of English must demonstrate the appropriate CEFR[7] proficiency for access:

- Level 5 or 6 requires B2 proficiency for access
- Level 4 requires B1 proficiency for access
- Level 3 requires A2 proficiency for access
- Level 1 and Level 2 courses do not require demonstration of CEFR proficiency for access.

An Irish Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied qualification achieved through English meets the CEFR B2 English language requirement.

The above requirements also apply to all RPL applicants.

Important Note:

Employment experience in the area for which RPL is being sought must fall under one of the two categories below

1. The applicant must have **a minimum of six months full-time work experience** in the vocational area for which RPL is being sought

OR

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[5] To protect the integrity of the NFQ which sets out standards of knowledge, skill and competence in English.
[6] esol_part3_toolkit.pdf (solas.ie)
[7] International language standards | Cambridge English

2. The applicant must have **a minimum of 12 months part-time work experience** in the vocational area for which RPL is being sought.

RPL applicants must also:
- Fill in all required RPL forms and QA paperwork
- Attend all scheduled meetings with their mentor
    - Repeated unsuccessful engagement of any applicant with their mentor will result in the RPL application being suspended. All RPL applicants can avail of *Compassionate Consideration in Extenuating Circumstances* in accordance with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's assessment procedures if they have personal circumstances preventing them from engaging with the RPL process.
- Meet all submission deadlines as appropriate
    - A *Short-term Extension* to any assessment can be applied for in accordance with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's assessment procedures where an applicant is having difficulty meeting a submission deadline.

4.3.   The RPL Mentor

The RPL mentor is responsible for guiding and supporting the applicant through the RPL process and facilitating the applicant to ensure the evidence is consistent with the award standard. This will be done in consultation with the RPL assessor where necessary. The RPL mentor should be someone independent of the assessment process, i.e., the RPL mentor and assessor should not be the same person.

The RPL mentor may also have a role in determining the RPL applicant's appropriate NFQ level and the skills for which they should seek recognition. Tools to assist this process include the *Skills Checker* and the *RPL Toolkit for the FET Sector* which can be found on StaffCONNECT/Quality Assurance/Assessment Resources/RPL Tools.

A suite of RPL Assessment Templates that mirror the traditional Assessment Templates are available on StaffCONNECT/Quality Assurance/Assessment Resources/Assessment Templates/RPL Templates and must be used by all RPL mentors (and assessors).

4.4.   The RPL Assessor

The RPL assessor will be a suitably qualified, experienced assessor **and subject matter expert** with the ability to assess both Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL). The RPL assessor is appointed by the Provision.

The RPL assessor is responsible for assessing submitted assessment materials/portfolio in accordance with RPL QA processes and the award standard. The RPL assessor will also have a role in designing RPL assessment instruments such as briefs and grading rubrics in consultation with the RPL mentor. Additionally, as a subject matter expert, they may be needed to support the RPL mentor as someone the mentor can consult when needed (e.g., to deliberate over evidence).

A suite of RPL Assessment Templates that mirror the traditional Assessment Templates are available on StaffCONNECT/Quality Assurance/Assessment Resources/Assessment Templates/RPL Templates and must be used by all RPL assessors (and mentors).

The RPL assessor will need to be familiar the principles and processes underpinning RPL and be aware of the following:

- The various forms of RPL (access, advanced entry, certification) and its associated evidence
- Award Specifications are used and not the ETB's validated programmes (Module Descriptors) and as such, the assessment techniques and guidelines in the Module Descriptors do not apply to RPL
- RPL evidence is **graded** and not marked
- Where possible, integration of module learning outcomes should be considered
- RPL portfolios go through the same QA processes as traditional learner portfolios.

RPL assessors will need to have an open mind when it comes to grading RPL evidence. Each RPL portfolio will be unique, and the individual nature of the evidence can be time-consuming to grade. The reflective and personal nature of RPL evidence must be respected.

4.5. External Appeals Office

The External Appeals Office must:
- Examine the applicant's appeal on the RPL application outcome/result
- Investigate whether relevant assessment procedures were followed
- Make a decision on the appeal (see Section 8: RPL Appeals).

4.6. Information, Recruitment and Guidance

The Information, Recruitment and Guidance Support Service will be available to support and refer RPL applicants to Provision where the RPL application (i) isn't suitable or (ii) is complete and the applicant is progressing to further studies within FET or onwards to Higher Education.

4.7. QQI (Foreign and UK Qualifications)

The NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) Ireland Foreign Qualifications Database provides comparability advice and information on academic qualifications. This information will help users understand their qualification in the context of the Irish education and training system by comparing foreign qualifications to an Irish qualification of a similar type and level on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

It can also help employers, funding agencies and education and training institutions to determine if an applicant holds the academic qualifications for a particular job, funding or course: User Guide for NARIC database 010217.pdf (qqi.ie).

NARIC is managed by QQI, but users must search the database themselves and download their own comparability statement.

QQI also publish and maintain a guide to comparing qualifications in Ireland and the UK due to the regular mobility of learners and workers across the UK and Ireland. Qualifications can Cross Boundries 2019.pdf (qqi.ie) is a guide to comparing these qualifications.

5. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process

As outlined in Figure 1, the RPL process can follow the:

Recognition of Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL) process (See Section 2.5 for definition and Section 6 for process)

and/or

Recognition of Prior EXPERIENTIAL Learning (RPEL) process (See Section 2.6 for definition and Section 7 for process)

Figure 1 Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning Process

Recognition of Prior **CERTIFIED** Learning (Section 6)	Recognition of Prior **EXPERIENTIAL** Learning (Section 7)

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 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 (see Section 2.5 for definition).

This prior learning can be recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and may entitle the applicant to:
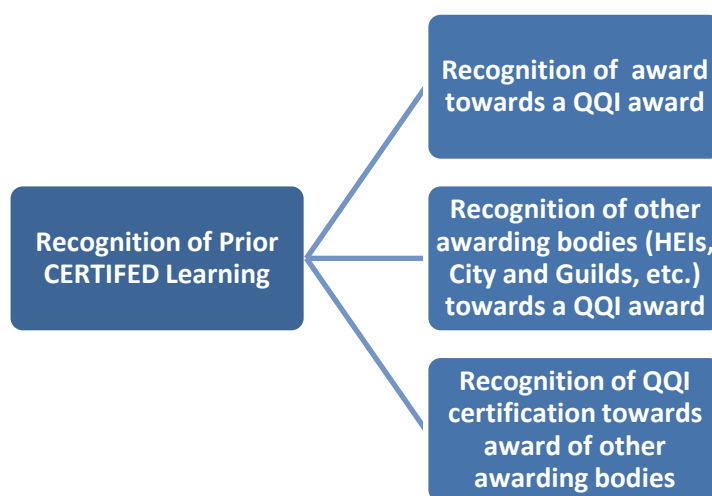
- Access to a programme or programme of study (non-standard entry)
- Advanced entry on the programme
- Exemptions from some parts of a programme

As stated in Section 4.2, QQI provide a list of exemptions exemptions.pdf (qqi.ie) that are **the only non-CAS exemptions** that can be submitted by a Provider on behalf of an applicant.

6.2. Types of RPCL

There are three types of RPCL considered in this process (see Figure 2)

Figure 2 Types of RPCL

Recognition of Prior CERTIFED Learning

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

6.2.1 Recognition of award towards a QQI award

Where an applicant has achieved a CAS award and has thus 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. In this instance, **the five-year rule does not apply**: the applicant's award will be recognised by the QQI Business System (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.** This includes recognition for FETAC awards.

The following must be considered as part of this process (see Table 1).

Table 1: Considerations of RPCL

Comparison of Learning Outcomes	It is recommended that the RPL assessor compare the learning outcomes of the prior certified learning to the learning outcomes of the module(s)/programme in which the applicant is seeking the RPCL: this must be completed in line with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's RPL Procedure 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 (timeframe dependent on discipline) and in line with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's RPL Procedure. For example, ICT of ten years ago is of limited benefit today on a current programme unless the applicant has continued to work and develop skills in that area, while some culinary training outcomes or communication skills may be more timeless. The general rule for currency is that the certification must have been achieved within the last five years. **Older certification may still be used for RPL if the skills achieved are still in use.**

6.2.2   Recognition of other awarding bodies (Higher Education Institution (HEI), City & 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)

QQI has identified a listing of awards to which RPCL may be applied (QQI, 2018). Where an award is not on the published list, the applicant is required to provide the relevant learning programme and original transcript of results, with their application, in order to apply for RPCL. As stated in Section 4.2, these certificates/transcripts/programme learning outcomes must be translated into English by a recognised translating service if they are in a language other than English.

Applicants seeking *Statements of Equivalence* for foreign qualifications may be referred to the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) to have their qualifications aligned with the appropriate Irish qualification. *International Mobility and Prior Learning* is the QQI body responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications (see Section 4.7: QQI (Foreign and UK Qualifications).

6.2.3   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

1. It is the applicant's responsibility to make contact with the ETB via the IRGSS contact details on www.collegeofFET.ie (website link for RPL-specific enquiries to be developed). The initial enquiry will be screened for suitability by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board using the RPL Screening Template available on StaffCONNECT.
2. If the outcome of the screening is successful the applicant completes the RPL Application Form (not necessary for CAS award exemptions). If the outcome of the screening is unsuccessful the applicant should be directed back to the IRGSS to discuss other routes to certification.
3. The applicant should be notified about the outcome of the screening using the letter templates available in the Assessment Procedures Forms folder on StaffCONNECT.
4. For successful outcomes, the Provision Co-ordinator appoints an RPL mentor.
5. The RPL mentor supports the applicant in portfolio preparation (gathering copies of certs, transcripts, learning outcomes from previous certified learning, etc.) and identifying gaps in learning and/or evidence where applicable.
6. The Provision Co-ordinator nominates the RPL assessor to map learning outcomes (where required) and to assess the portfolio. The RPL assessor shall consider the application and agree a decision regarding it within a reasonable timeframe (recommended timeframe: twenty (20) working days) of receipt of the application in line with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's RPL Procedure (see Table 1 for considerations in this process).
7. The Provision Co-ordinator informs the applicant of the outcome. The assessment evidence is presented at the next RPL assessment period.
8. The applicant can appeal the decision (see Section 8).

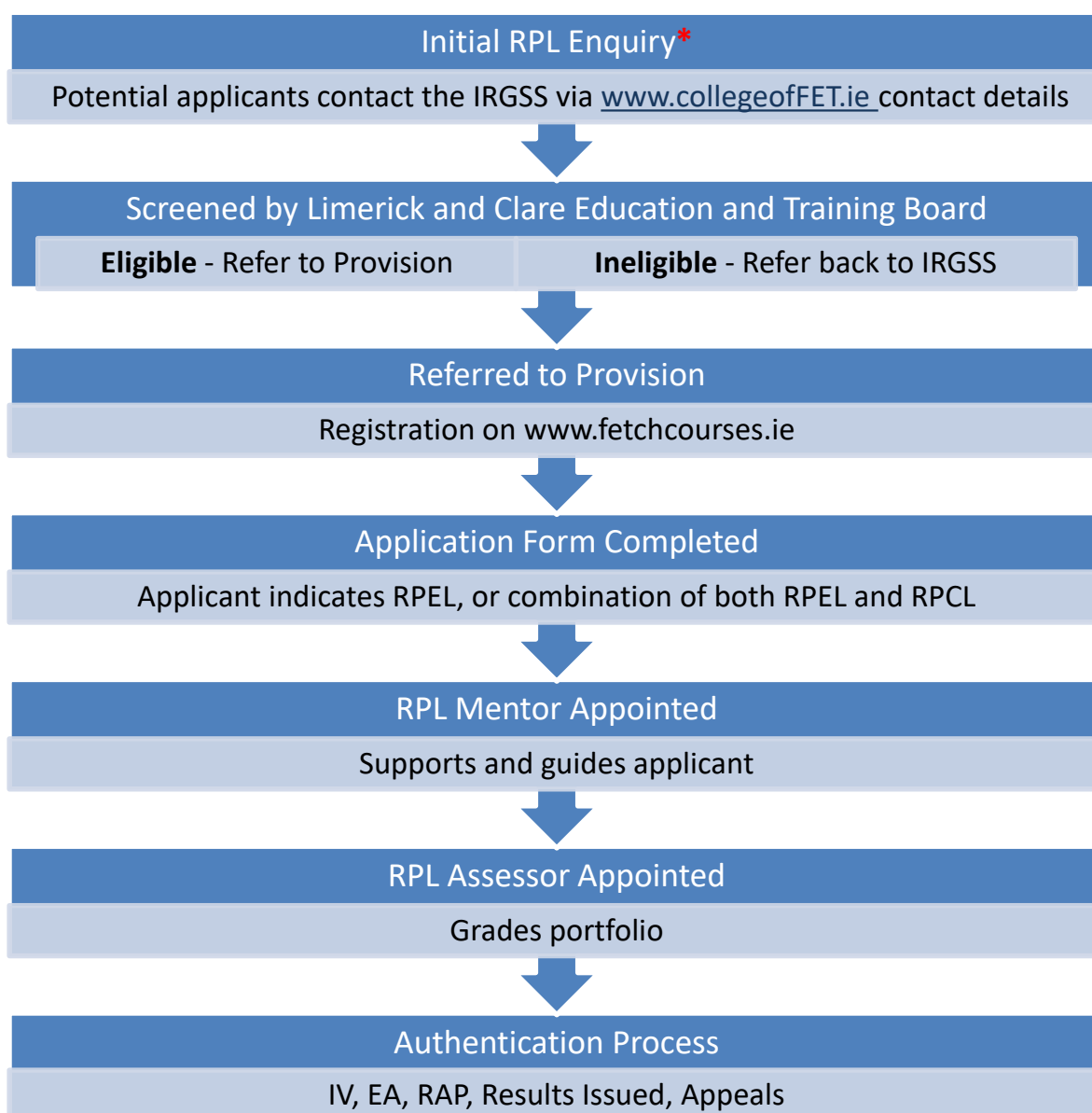## 7. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) Process

7.1. About RPEL

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is non-formal and informal learning acquired through life or work experience. It can also be in the form of learning achieved from non-accredited bodies, or from certifying bodies outside of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This type of learning has not been previously linked to an award on the NFQ (see Section 2.6 for definition).

7.2. RPEL Process

The RPEL Application process follows the steps outlined in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: RPEL Process

Initial RPL Enquiry*
Potential applicants contact the IRGSS via www.collegeofFET.ie contact details

⬇

Screened by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board
Eligible - Refer to Provision	**Ineligible** - Refer back to IRGSS

⬇

Referred to Provision
Registration on www.fetchcourses.ie

⬇

Application Form Completed
Applicant indicates RPEL, or combination of both RPEL and RPCL

⬇

RPL Mentor Appointed
Supports and guides applicant

⬇

RPL Assessor Appointed
Grades portfolio

⬇

Authentication Process
IV, EA, RAP, Results Issued, Appeals

*Website and enquiry form to be developed.

1. It is the applicant's responsibility to make contact with the ETB via the IRGSS contact details on www.collegeofFET.ie (website link for RPL-specific enquiries to be developed).
2. The initial enquiry will be screened for suitability by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board using the RPL Screening Template available on StaffCONNECT.
3. If the outcome of the screening is successful the applicant completes the RPL Application Form. If the outcome of the screening is unsuccessful the applicant should be directed back to the IRGSS to discuss other routes to certification.
4. The applicant should be notified about the outcome of the screening using the letter templates available in the Assessment Procedures Forms folder on StaffCONNECT.
5. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's RPL Support Officer will support the Provision in completing the Skills Checker to determine the applicant's NFQ level and module(s) to make an RPL claim against where required.
6. Following the initial stages of screening, application form and being assigned to Provision, the applicant then registers on www.fetchcourses.ie with the course code they have been provided with by the Provision to which they have been assigned.
7. The Provision Co-ordinator assigns an RPL mentor to support the applicant through the RPEL process (see Section 4.1: RPL Roles and Responsibilities, The Provision Co-ordinator). The applicant, supported by the mentor, must demonstrate that the required equivalent learning has been achieved by producing a portfolio of evidence based on the learning outcomes of the award(s) they are seeking recognition for.

The portfolio of evidence is comparable to portfolios that learners completing module(s) in the traditional manner must complete. It is comprised of assessment evidence which can include, but is not limited to:

- References
- CV
- Job descriptions and experiences
- Personal statements
- Details of any training completed
- Certificates for qualifications, training programmes, etc.
- Sample work (e.g., drawings, minutes from meetings, business plan, etc.)
- Evidence from the applicant's personal life
- Published work
- Professional licenses/registrations or membership of professional organisations
- Acknowledged accomplishments
- Video/audio recordings
- Relevant recreational activities or hobbies

The applicant may be required to provide verification from previous or current employers that the learning stated has been achieved by the applicant. Such verifications should be signed and (where possible) stamped by the employer.

Where an applicant cannot get verification from their employer then other forms of evidence such as payslips or contracts may be used.

The portfolio of evidence must be presented in such a way that the matching of the knowledge, skills and competencies of the module learning outcomes to the prior learning is clearly demonstrated. Other assessment tools such as assignment, interview, observation, etc., can also be used to assess prior experiential learning. These assessment techniques will comprise part of the portfolio of evidence if used.

As for 'traditional' learners, RPL applicants will be required to complete and include QA paperwork in their portfolio where appropriate.

8. The Provision Co-ordinator will also appoint the RPL assessor to consider the portfolio of evidence. The assessor should examine the submitted portfolio and agree a decision within a reasonable timeframe (recommended timeframe: twenty (20) working days). The portfolio is assessed, and a grade is then assigned by the assessor.

    Applicants should receive a grade for their portfolio of evidence which carries equal weight to modules taken in the conventional method. Assessors must satisfy themselves that the evidence produced by the applicant and the assessment instruments used, uphold the principles of assessment.

    Portfolios must demonstrate evidence of the required standard, albeit using an alternative method.

    Submission of a portfolio does not guarantee that the applicant will achieve an award(s).

9. Once graded, RPL Portfolios are submitted for authentication and will follow the same QA procedures as those portfolios completed and submitted in the traditional manner. The folders will go through internal verification, external authentication, results approval and appeals.

    a. RPL Portfolios must be indicated when submitting estimates (column in spreadsheet)

    b. There are RPL Assessment Templates for IV (IV Checklist and IV Report)

    c. For internal verification and external authentication **RPL Portfolios are not sampled** and are **Category 3** in the *Risk Categorisation for EA* table. **All RPL Portfolios must go forward for EA**

    d. The same EA Report template can be used for both traditional and RPL portfolios

    e. Consideration must be given by Provision as to the number of RPL Portfolios going forward at any particular authentication period and the impact this has on resources (assessors, IVs, EAs, QASS). The nature of RPL means that applications can be ongoing all through the year and RPL Portfolios must only be submitted for authentication during the quieter periods of **February**, **April** and **October**. Where this is not possible (in exceptional circumstances), the provision Co-ordinator should liaise with the QA Support Service before submitting module estimates.

10. The Provision Co-ordinator informs the applicant of the outcome of the RPL application, i.e., informed of provisional result(s) as traditional learners are.

11. The applicant can appeal the decision (see Section 8) in line with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's Assessment Appeals Procedure.

8. RPL Appeals

The applicant has the right to appeal the decision in relation to RPL (can appeal decision on screening or grade awarded). Appeals must be made within a recommended timeframe (five (5) working days of the decision). In exceptional circumstances, the Provision Co-ordinator may extend this time limit. All appeals must be made in writing using the [Assessment Appeals Application Form](#).

All Appeals will be processed by the External Appeals Office located in the Quality Assurance Support Office in accordance with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's [Assessment Appeals Procedure Results or Process](#), as for conventional learners.

Decisions on appeals are final.

References

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

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CEDEFOP, *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*, Publications Office, 2016, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/378817

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2013, Revised 2018) *Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers*. Available at: https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-10/quality-assuring-assessment-guidelines-for-providers-revised-2013.pdf [Accessed April 25, 2022]

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QQI (2015) *Principles and Operational Guidelines Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training*. QQI. Available from Draft principles for the implementation of a national approach to the recognition of prior learning in Irish higher education and training (qqi.ie) [Accessed 15 January 2022]

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