

LCETB Case Study 2 - Title: Raising Public Awareness of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Introduction

Over the last few years, as part of its learner-centred approach, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's College of Further Education and Training (FET) Strategic Framework (2022-2025) has prioritised the development of mechanisms to recognise prior learning. Led by the organisation's Quality Assurance Support Service Team (QA), these developments include RPL policies and procedures, an RPL-specific budget, and RPL projects for learners and staff. QA-led Professional Learning and Development has increased staff capacity in RPL. This approach is now embedded in FET operations.

In 2024, the focus turned to increasing the number of RPL applicants by engaging with our organisation's Marketing and Communications Team to raise awareness of RPL as a route to certification, progression, employment, and an enabler of lifelong learning.

Description of issue

Working with the Marketing and Communications Team, we identified our target audiences for RPL. It is important to note that although RPL is for everybody, some audience segments include hard-to-reach communities, those whose first language is not English, and those who have experienced difficulty with formalised education or have literacy issues. Therefore, taking a 'plain language' approach to our communications is key. The concept of RPL is not widely known or understood by the public. The strategy devised by our Marketing and Communications Team to raise the profile of RPL in our region involved creating a public awareness campaign encouraging prospective learners to "Recognise Your Past" and "Empower Your Future" through RPL. The campaign features five RPL Heroes who share their unique and inspiring stories of completing RPL and transforming their lives.

Action

Having developed an information document outlining RPL policies and processes and how prospective learners can contact the RPL team, we worked closely with the National Adult Literacy Agency to prioritise and implement a 'plain language' approach. This was key to making the information inclusive and accessible. This content went through a further layer of revision as our Marketing and Communications Team revised it to ensure it could be easily interpreted and understood by all audience segments.

The Marketing and Communications Team asked us to identify RPL Heroes with unique backgrounds and inspiring stories to share while being mindful of diversity and the importance of representation. We identified five RPL Heroes: Michelle, Nataliia, Thomas, Matoko, and Cristina.

The Marketing and Communications Team interviewed the heroes to learn more about their past and the impact that RPL is having on their future. They created case studies based on their findings. Next, they invited the heroes to partake in a photoshoot and videography session to capture content that is being used for marketing purposes. This content has resulted in the creation of various campaign assets across print, digital, social media and out-of-home advertising.

The messages of lifelong learning, mobility, progression and employment are key to what we want to communicate about RPL and come best from those who have been through the RPL process themselves.

"RPL has completely transformed my life and that of my family. I am now employed in a job that I never thought possible when I first arrived in Ireland." — Cristina, Early Years Educator

Key Outcomes/Impacts

Key Outputs:

As mentioned, undertaking this work has resulted in developing various campaign assets to effectively communicate RPL's message to its target audiences. These outputs include the following:

- An Information Guide that details all the information needed to understand how RPL works and how to apply. It includes case studies based on our heroes that communicate the value and impact of RPL. A plain language approach was undertaken to lower communication barriers, making the content more accessible and inclusive.
- A suite of videos telling the stories of our heroes, highlighting the transformative impact of RPL on their lives.
- A new and optimised RPL landing page that enables prospective and current learners to access information easily.

- Out-of-home advertising featuring our heroes (e.g., billboards, buses, commuter squares, retail points, etc.) directs audiences to the RPL landing page.
- Social media advertising (e.g., paid and organic content on ETB social channels).
- New Pull-Ups featuring our RPL Heroes.
- Additional PR pieces and articles celebrating RPL and highlighting our heroes' stories.

So, what was the impact?

- After only two weeks, we saw an increase in awareness and enquiries for RPL in our region.
- Engagement levels were high across our social media content.
- There was a significant rise in traffic to the RPL landing page.
- Despite being a newly published landing page, our collegeofFET.ie/rpl is beginning to rank in the top search results on Google locally.
- The campaign's second phase will be bigger, with further channels and content being leveraged to generate awareness, engagement and enquiries.

Key Learnings

The initial two-week campaign has generated a lot of interest in RPL locally. We have received many enquiries relevant to FET. However, other enquiries were better suited to higher education as the individuals concerned hoped to achieve qualifications on the higher end of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). We redirected these enquiries to the relevant teams in the region's higher education institutions. By developing our relationships with these teams, we can create a two-way channel where prospective learners can be redirected based on their suitability. Over the coming weeks, we will work with our Marketing and Communications Team to review the first iteration of the campaign before moving on to the second phase.

Relevant Links

[Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) | College of FET](#)