

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Definitions, Principles and Guidelines

PREPARED BY SCQF PARTNERSHIP IN COLLABORATION WITH
MFHEA

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Introduction

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA¹) has seen a significant increase in requests from various education institutions to introduce Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to their programmes of study.

MFHEA has produced this guidance document to ensure that institutions' RPL policies and procedures are appropriate and beneficial to all learners.

The document is designed to be used by institutions wishing to develop (or review) their RPL policies and procedures.

When reading these guidelines, the term RPL will be used as an overarching definition to describe all terms defined below.

- The term "programmes of study" will also be used to refer to both awards and qualifications that sit on the MQF². The term 'component' will be used to refer to smaller parts of a full programme of learning which can be assessed separately.
- A person making a claim for RPL will be referred to as the 'candidate' in order to distinguish from other learners or applicants.

What is RPL?

"RPL is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations as through life and work experiences" [*SCQF definition 2010*]

RPL³ is a concept that enables individuals to have their learning and experiences recognised for a number of purposes which can benefit the individual, employers and the economy which include:

- RPL for personal or career development;
- RPL to gain entry to an award or qualification;
- RPL for the award of ECTS points to gain exemption from parts of an existing programme of study or to gain entry with advanced standing; and
- VNFIL to award vocational qualifications after assessment to specific occupational standards. (*see detailed definition of VNFIL below*)

¹ MFHEA superseded NCFHE in January 2021

² Malta Qualifications Framework

³ This document deals with the process of RPL for entry to a programme of study or for exemption from parts of a programme of study prior to admission to that programme of study. It does not cover any claims for RPL during a programme of study.

Different Types of RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning⁴ is achieved when an individual can have their learning formally assessed and quality assured to successfully be admitted to or gain exemptions to components or parts of a formal qualification or award through the use of learning outcomes.

Formative RPL is where the candidate is looking to have knowledge, skills and competencies assessed for personal or career development.

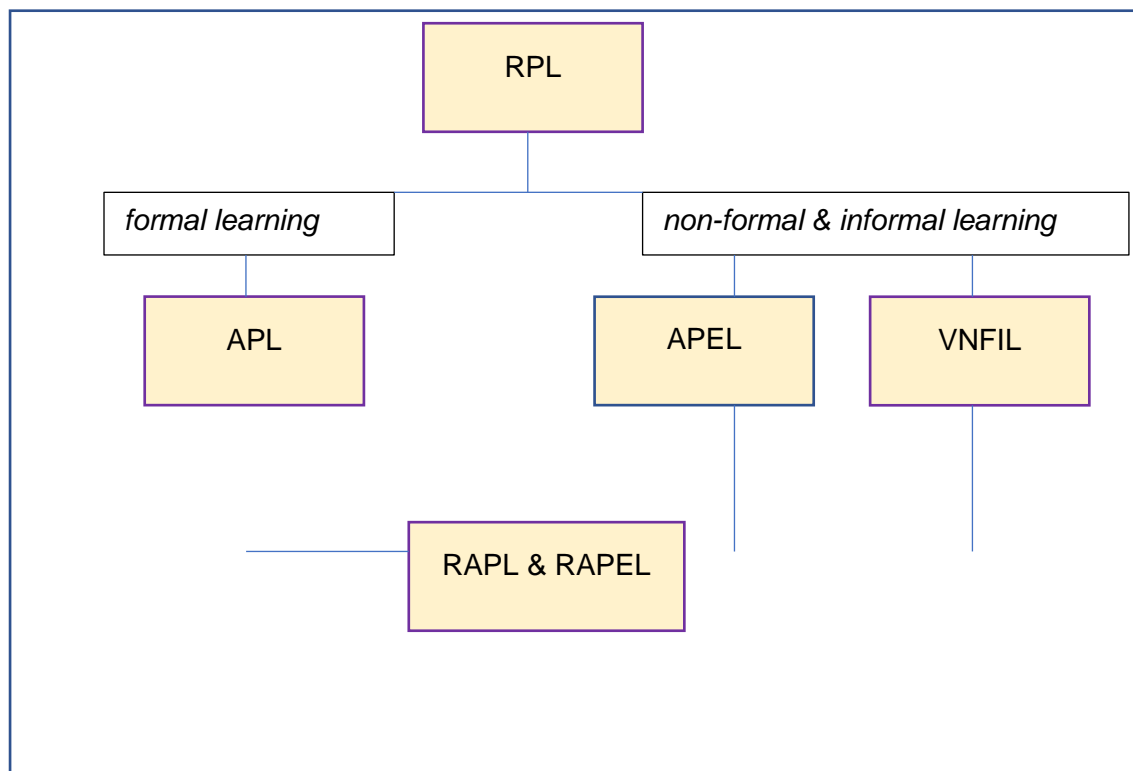
Summative RPL is where formal ECTS credit is awarded and recognised as having the same value as credit gained in formal teaching institutions.

Credit Transfer is when a candidate has gained a formal award or qualification, and has received formal ECTS credit, and is looking to gain entry at an advanced stage or exemption from a component of another programme of study, where the **learning outcomes** of the first programme of study match the learning outcomes of the new programme of study. The credit can either be subject specific or general credit if the learning is at the same MQF level.

⁴ In some countries/sectors and by some agencies this process may also be referred to by other terms such as validation and accreditation but for the purposes of this document and RPL in Malta the term 'recognition' will be used.

Different Forms of RPL – Definitions

RPL can take many forms and the diagram and text below strives to explain these and how they relate to each other.



Accreditation of Prior Learning – **APL**

A process of reflection which identifies and accredits an individual's knowledge, skills, understanding and competencies that have been developed throughout their lives by means of participation **in non-formal and informal learning**.

Example in Practice

Josef has been working as a warehouse assistant for 5 years and has undertaken all the in house health and safety and logistics training available to him, he also volunteers at his local Sea Cadets in his spare time. He would like help to accredit his knowledge and skills to enable him to understand the next steps he would need to take have his non-formal and informal learning accredited and hence be considered for a career upgrade within the organisation.

Accreditation of Experiential Learning – **APEL**

A process of reflection which identifies and accredits an individual's experience developed through exposure in life to a variety of experiences (at home, certificates gained through formal education, at work or volunteering, etc.).

Example in Practice

Rachel left school with a number of formal (???) qualifications and has worked in a care home as a care assistant for 9 years as well as looking after her family. She has decided that she would like to train as a nurse and would like to understand if she has the relevant aptitude, skills, knowledge

and experience to be accepted to the programme before she approaches an institution to see if she can have her experience recognised.

Recognition of Accredited Prior Learning –RAPL or RAPEL

Recognition of Accredited Prior Learning or Recognition of Accredited Prior Experiential Learning is when an individual who has had their prior learning accredited (see also RPL and APEL). This learning process is then formally assessed and is awarded ECTS credit points and is pegged to an MQF level toward a programme of study that they are then offered exemptions or advanced entry to.

Example in Practice

Morgan has an Accounting award that was undertaken 7 years ago and since that time she has worked as an account manager and has undertaken all the annual training courses to keep her knowledge, skills and professional practice current. She is now looking to have this award alongside her 7 years' experience in accounting to be recognised for advanced entry to a new qualification in accounting and management.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

“a process which identifies, assesses and formally certifies the knowledge, skills and competencies which individuals develop throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning.” Subsidiary Legislation 327.432 VNFIL

This term is used in Malta to refer to a few vocational sectors who work with stakeholders and National Occupational Standards to conduct and validate assessment to enable MFHEA to award qualifications based wholly on experience. This process is regulated by MFHEA and is a separate and distinct process to the RPL process noted in this guidance.

NOTE:

The Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) is also a form of RPL and the term is used widely in Europe and features in the EU recommendation of 2012 and in the 2012 Cedefop Guidelines. For VNFIL, however in Malta this term has a very specific definition laid down in legislation and refers to a specific process:

Developing the institution's RPL system: principles and guidelines

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

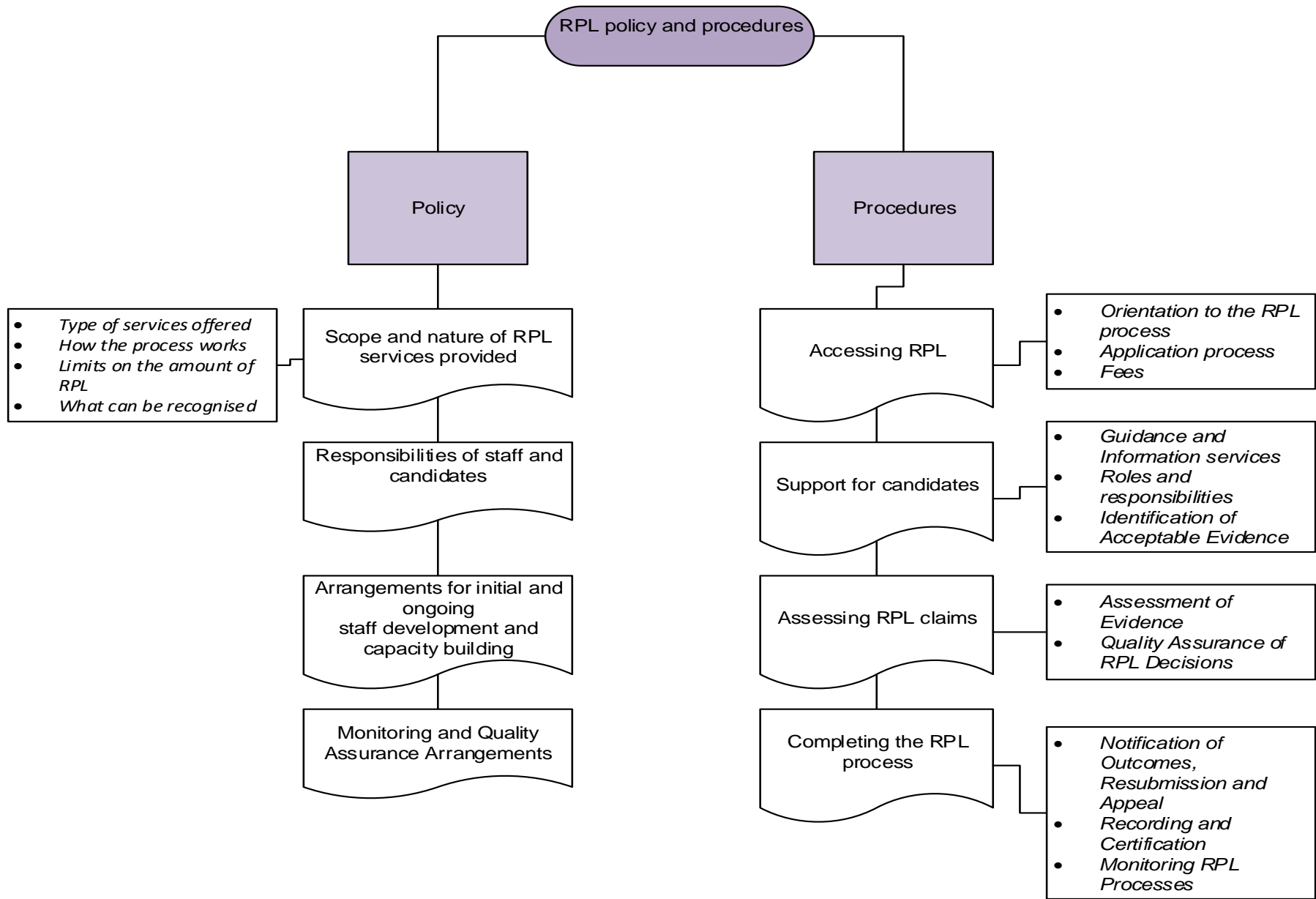
RPL should always:

- be learner centred, fair and respect the privacy of the individual;
- take account of Equality & Diversity issues;
- be accessible and flexible;
- be given for the learning and not the experience alone;
- involve the use of the MQF in determining the level, volume and depth of evidence;
- be reliable, transparent and consistent;
- involve formal assessment for summative claims;
- be recognised to be of the same value of learning gained in formal learning;
- be quality assured both internally and externally; and
- be in line with any Statutory Legislation.

Guidelines for institutions

This document will now examine the recommended content of an RPL Policy and the associated procedures which should be in place if an institution wishes to offer RPL to candidates. This document will also provide a set of guidelines to assist institutions in creating such documents.

A policy is an overarching statement of an institution's intent with the set of procedures outlining the processes by which the institution will implement its policy. The diagram in the next page sets out the topics to be included in an RPL policy and associated procedure.



RPL Policy

Institutions should have an overarching RPL policy which outlines:

- the scope and nature of their RPL activities including:
 - the types of RPL service provided (e.g. types of learning recognised);
 - how RPL can be used to gain access to or exemption from programmes of study within the institution;
 - what can and cannot be recognised/transferred.
 - Extent of RPL allowed (*see below*)
- the responsibilities for the RPL processes within the institution.
- arrangements for staff development and capacity building in the area of RPL.
- how RPL recognition process and use of credit transfer is monitored and quality assured.

It is important to note that whether or not an application for RPL is accepted, and/or the amount of credit that may be awarded by a receiving institution, is entirely at the discretion of that institution.

Institutions should outline the minimum and maximum amount of credit that is achievable through RPL at an institutional level, for example, a minimum of the smallest component within the programme of study and a maximum of 50% of the total credit of the exit programme of study and this must be approved by MFHEA. **Note:** MFHEA does not allow institutions to award a full qualification solely through RPL.

Institutions should also make clear the types of programmes of study for which RPL is available. Institutional policies should specify exactly which type(s) of RPL they offer and which programmes of study that they will offer RPL towards.

There may be some programmes of study that do not lend themselves to an RPL claim, for example:

- a regulated professional accreditation that the programme of study may offer, or;
- programmes that require a minimum number of practice hours to deem candidates “fit to practice” (and where this is the case it should be made clear in the policy document), or;
- qualifications leading to a professional warrant.

This may include those professions included in the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications,⁵ but may also include other programmes such as First Aid or others which may require a renewal of a licence to practice.

Institutions should use the Level Descriptors of the MQF as per the Referencing Report of 2016 to determine the level of the evidence that is submitted to provide a basis to then assess and compare the volume or depth of learning that can be awarded at component and programme level. The learning outcomes of the programme of study where the claim for RPL is being assessed against must also be used to determine the match of evidence.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32005L0036>

Procedures for RPL

Institutions should have documented RPL procedures to guide staff and applicants through the different stages of the RPL process. All RPL policies should include the following to be eligible for approval by MFHEA:

Accessing RPL

- Orientation to the RPL process. This could include:
 - Making sure clear guidance is available about how it is used in the institution and how to make a claim (this could be on, for example, an institution's website, intranet or quality assurance documentation);
 - Making sure staff know how to direct learners towards RPL if appropriate.
- Application Process;
- Fees.

Support for Candidates

- Guidance and information services;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Identification of Acceptable Evidence.

Assessing RPL claims

- Assessment of Evidence;
- Quality Assurance of RPL decisions.

Completing the RPL process

- Notification of Outcomes, Resubmission and Appeal;
- Recording and Certification;
- Monitoring RPL processes.

RPL procedures are required by every education institution wishing to introduce RPL as part of policies. A well-written RPL Policy will allow institutions to lay out the actions that they will take in order to enact their RPL policy. They will also help to ensure that there is a reliable, transparent and consistent approach taken across the institution in line with the overarching principles.

Accessing RPL

Why is this important?

Access to RPL needs to be fair and transparent, keeping the learner at the centre. Learners need to know that RPL is available to them and how they can use the resulting credit to gain entry or exemptions in their chosen programme (prior to application and admission). Before they make a claim, learners need to know how to make a claim, how much this will cost and how long the process will take.

The institution's procedures relating to access to RPL should therefore reflect the following underpinning principles:

- learner centred, fair and respects the privacy of the individual;
- taking account of Equality & Diversity issues;
- accessibility and flexibility.

Guidelines

The institution should have procedures to ensure that learners can make an informed decision about making an RPL claim. The procedures should describe clearly:

1. how the use and requirements of RPL are promoted to learners. This should include, as a minimum, information about:
 - *how a claim for RPL links to an offer for admission to a programme of study;*
 - *the possible outcomes of a process of RPL including the minimum and maximum amount of credit available through RPL;*
 - *who is responsible for processing RPL claims (e.g. at institution or departmental level);*
 - *how the institution's RPL service can be accessed.*
2. the application process. This should include, as a minimum, information about:
 - *the detail required in a claim (for example, does the candidate need to state exactly what they wish exemption from and how much exemption they are seeking?);*
 - *the format of the submission;*
 - *the quantity and type of evidence that will be acceptable;*
 - *the timescales of the RPL process and the links to the overall timescales of the institutional application process.*
3. the fees associated with a claim for RPL. This could include, as minimum, information about:
 - *the cost of the process for individuals;*
 - *any impact on any subsequent programme of study fees.*

Further Guidance

Any RPL policy and associated processes should clearly detail the possible outcomes. Outcomes of an RPL claim could be:

- full acceptance of the claim as entry requirements onto a programme of study;
- full acceptance of a claim for advanced entry (exemption) to a programme of study;
- partial acceptance of the claim for exemption;
- a request for resubmission of a claim including further evidence;
- failure of claim with recommendations for alternative paths
- failure of the claim.

The procedures should also outline if there is an opportunity to resubmit or appeal should the initial application fail, or the outcome received is not what the candidate was originally seeking.

It will also be important that the procedure and timeline following a successful completion of an RPL claim in terms of entry to the programme of study is clear to the candidate such as the date of the next intake that the candidate would be able to join.

The institution should also indicate the format of the submission and the quantity and type of evidence that would be expected/accepted. More information about evidence is available later in the document. It is useful if submissions are made in a standard format and that candidates are supplied with clear information or a proforma to allow them to do so.

Institutions may wish to consider whether there is a set fee for an RPL application or whether this is a sliding scale based on, for example, the volume of RPL sought. In the latter case, this means that institutions will need to decide at what point the candidate is provided with a cost outline so that they can decide whether they are able to meet that cost and wish to proceed.

Institutions should consider their fee structure to ensure that it is not prohibitive to the promotion of RPL and does not encourage the unnecessary repetition of learning.

Institutions should also consider the impact of RPL on the subsequent programme of study fee charged to any successful candidate where exemptions have been granted.

Examples of Good Practice

- Having a separate application process for RPL claims in order to maintain records of the number of applications and the percentage who are successful or unsuccessful. One practice could be to open the applications for RPL at the same time as standard applications are opened throughout the academic calendar for each intake, alternatively institutions could stipulate a unique opening and closing date for applications that suits the admissions cycle.
- Institutions have processes in place to identify applicants who have applied at entry level to a programme of study (without making a claim for RPL) and that the institution considers to have relevant skills, knowledge and experience to make a RPL claim and therefore offers guidance and support to those individuals to do so.
- Having a clear pricing structure for an RPL submission which is advertised on the institution's website

- Adjusting costs for programmes of study to ensure that any successful RPL candidate gaining exemption does not pay more than a learner undertaking the full programme of study.

Support for Candidates

Why is this important?

The guidance and support that an RPL candidate is offered can play a vital role in the success of a submission. At this crucial point candidates should be encouraged and motivated to develop a comprehensive suite of acceptable evidence that portrays all the learning, knowledge and skills that they have developed within their experience. They should be made aware of how this process will help them understand and reflect on their achievements and be given the tools and support to undertake the exercise. The support should be consistent, transparent, fair and provided in such a way so as to respect their privacy.

It is also important that staff and candidates are clear about what will be accepted as evidence to support an RPL claim and the reflective accounts within it as well as any certificates being provided for the purposes of credit transfer.

Guidelines

The institution should have procedures to ensure that learners are fully supported through the process of making an RPL claim. The procedures should describe clearly:

1. the guidance and support that will be provided to candidates. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the tools and/or the processes which will be available to enable the candidate to reflect upon their experience;*
 - *the guidance and support that will be available to assist the candidate in matching their evidence with programme of study learning outcomes;*
 - *the amount and type of support that a candidate can expect from the institution staff;*
 - *the timeline for the process and how this links to other institutional timelines and processes.*
2. the responsibilities for providing guidance and support. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *key roles in the RPL process and the experience, qualifications and/or training required for those roles;*
 - *which roles will be responsible for guidance and support at each stage of the process;*
 - *the guidance and support provided by each role.*
3. the evidence which will be accepted for an RPL claim. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the agreed criteria for evidence in terms of:*
 - *Acceptability*
 - *Sufficiency*
 - *Authenticity*
 - *Currency*
 - *the types of evidence accepted especially where these are particular to an individual subject area or profession.*

Further Guidance

Support should be provided by suitably experienced staff in both RPL and in the subject area(s) involved. Initial guidance could be facilitated by specific RPL guidance staff, Careers Guidance staff or similar. This could be used as an initial screening to gauge suitability of candidates and confirm their commitment to the process, before providing them with an academic member of staff for support should they decide to proceed with a claim. This initial process could be done in a number of ways such as a group exercise, or to respect the privacy of the individual, in one to one sessions.

This approach could offer the academic team administrative support to co-ordinate timescales, and ensure that the process is consistent and fair. However, it will be up to the institution at what stage in the process academic members of staff are involved as this may be dependent on existing institutional processes.

However, institutions' RPL processes should always involve an academic member of staff with the relevant subject knowledge to provide support to the candidate. This member of staff should have a clear understanding of the RPL procedure and have experience in working with the learning outcomes in the component or programme of study that the claim is being made toward.

To enable candidates to reflect on their experiences, job roles and tasks and assist the candidate to extract what they learned from each experience, institutions may wish to design a process or a set of activities which take the candidate through the reflective process to identify evidence. Staff supporting candidates should be able to assist them in how to extract what they have learned from their experience. However, the staff member should not be involved in the development of the evidence or writing of reflective accounts. Institutions may wish to consider providing a set of proformas to assist the candidate in recording their reflective accounts and evidence.

Institutions should also consider what evidence they are willing to accept in a claim for RPL in terms of:

- Acceptability
 - any evidence provided should be appropriately matched to the learning outcomes of the new programme of study.
- Sufficiency
 - any evidence should be sufficient in breadth and depth, including evidence of reflection, to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes claimed.
- Authenticity
 - methods should be put in place to ensure that any evidence presented is the candidate's own learning including any certificates produced. Consideration should be given as to whether the candidate will be asked to produce any additional authentication from other sources.
- Currency
 - any evidence should demonstrate learning that reflects current practice in the field of study- for credit transfer or experience this may vary between disciplines, e.g. Computing may have a shorter lifespan than social science, unless the candidate can demonstrate how they have kept knowledge and skills up to date with appropriate continuing professional development and practice.

The types of evidence that may be acceptable will very much depend on the subject area. The list below indicates some examples which may be appropriate, please note this is not exhaustive and will depend on the programme of study and the candidate's experiences.

- MQF Certificated learning;
- other certificated learning or open badges;
- references;
- authenticated reports or outputs;
- project work;
- blogs or video diaries;
- witness testimony;
- volunteering records;
- observation of practice or simulation;
- assessment on demand;
- structured interview; and
- authenticated presentations.

Institutions may wish to provide candidates with information in a clear and accessible format covering the areas noted in this document such as:

- expectations- what can they expect to gain, minimum, maximum credit;
- fees;
- timescales;
- academic mentor or supervisor role;
- identification of evidence;
- acceptable evidence;
- standard portrayal of evidence, e.g. essay with portfolio and presentation
- assessment of evidence;
- results how and when they will be notified;
- what happens if the submission fails; and
- indication of next intake to programme of study upon completion of claim.

The Examples of Good Practice are in the next page.

Examples of Good Practice

- Having a checklist for staff of what they are expected to cover in the initial guidance interview. This could be signed off by the candidate and the member of staff to ensure that the procedures have been followed and that the candidate fully understands the RPL process. This document could form part of the candidate's student record.
- Preparing a timeline for RPL candidates to adhere to when making an RPL submission that sits in line with the academic calendar of exam panels to enable progression.
- Providing ongoing support and feedback to candidates at key points throughout the process to ensure that they are on track to a successful submission.
- Ensuring a comprehensive and clear information pack is available to candidates outlining the processes, timelines, requirements, role and responsibilities and outcomes
- Having clearly set out information, available to both staff and candidates, indicating the types of evidence and the requirements (including any particular to specific subject/professional areas) in terms of the authentication of that evidence that should be provided by candidates.
- Having institution-developed proformas that allow candidates to clearly set out the relevance of the evidence included in a claim and to provide authentication.

Assessing RPL Claims

Why is this important?

A robust, consistent and quality assured approach to assessing RPL claims is key to a successful RPL process. In line with the overarching principles, processes should ensure that RPL is given for the learning and not just the experience alone (these are simply the vehicle through which learning is acquired). Any evidence must meet the criteria for acceptable evidence and be matched against the learning outcomes.

Staff carrying out the assessment of claims should do so in a fair and consistent manner and take due cognisance of the MQF levels and other key reference points. It will also be important that decisions taken within the assessment process are carefully and clearly recorded to ensure consistency of approach and to provide transparency of the process.

Individual claims for RPL and the institutional processes for RPL should undergo the same rigorous internal and external QA processes that all other subjects, programmes of study and systems are subject to within the institution. This will help to reassure all stakeholders of the validity of RPL claims.

Guidelines

The institution should have procedures to ensure that RPL assessment is robust, transparent and quality assured. The procedures should describe clearly:

1. the process of assessment. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the MQF levels and their link to the assessment process;*
 - *other possible reference points;*
 - *the matching process to learning outcomes.*
2. the evidence which will be accepted for an RPL claim. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the agreed criteria for evidence in terms of:*
 - *Acceptability*
 - *Sufficiency*
 - *Authenticity*
 - *Currency*
 - *the types of evidence accepted especially where these is particular to an individual subject area or profession.*
3. the recording requirements for decisions. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the level of detail required in rationales;*
 - *the format of recording decisions;*
 - *the possible decisions that can be made and the criteria for those*
4. the steps in place to ensure that all RPL decisions are made consistently and appropriately. This should include as a minimum information about:
 - *the process for ensuring the consistency and reliability of decision making (sometimes known as moderation or verification);*
 - *the process for recording the checking of RPL decisions;*
 - *the way this process ties into other institutional internal and external quality assurance systems at subject/programme of study level.*

Further Guidance

It is useful if submissions are made in a standard format and that candidates are supplied with clear information or a proforma to allow them to do so. This will assist assessors to identify the match of evidence to learning outcomes and provide a process that is demonstrably reliable, fair, consistent and transparent.

Assessors should be academic subject specialists in the programme of study/subject area that the evidence is being measured against. The academic member of staff supporting the individual could initially assess the submission as long as this is then internally and externally moderated by other subject specialists in line with the standard quality assurance policies of the institution. This will enable staff to confidently agree upon the volume of credit that can be awarded and the level of learning the candidate has demonstrated.

Wherever possible best practice would be to integrate QA processes for RPL within the standard QA processes and procedures within the institution. An internal quality assurance process sometimes referred to as moderation or verification (in essence a second check on the decisions made) should ensure that any assessment is fair and consistent and that agreement upon the level and volume of credit is fair and comparable to similar RPL claims.

Examples of Good Practice

- Keeping a bank of anonymised RPL claims and the final awards of level and credit volumes for assessors of RPL claims to compare similar claims to ensure consistency.
- Developing a checklist including a clear set of criteria for assessors and moderators of RPL claims to use when assessing submissions.
- Asking candidates to create a portfolio, with a written essay to talk the assessor through the candidate's journey of previous certificated learning and experience, matched to the learning outcomes set. The inclusion of any essay can help with confirming the authenticity of the portfolio as well as helping to identify the learning that a candidate has undertaken. Institutions may ask for this in a particular format and to be written in the appropriate academic language, using the relevant institutional referencing system

Completing the RPL process

Why is this important?

It is important that a candidate is informed of the outcomes of their RPL claim in a clear and consistent manner. The institution will need to consider how this will happen and how it will be recorded within the institution and for the individual.

If the claim has not been successful, then the candidates should be informed of the next steps and the institution should consider what these will be in terms of allowing resubmissions and appeals.

The outcome of a claim for RPL for advanced entry or exemption may be added to an academic transcript at a specific point of the claim and an agreed form of words which identify what the claim was for, the level and volume of credit. This could be upon completion of the new programme of study or before the candidate is permitted to move onto the next level of the qualification.

In addition to the quality assurance of the RPL decisions described above, a further level of quality assurance processes should be included to ensure that the institution's RPL procedure and policy has been followed and that decisions made across the institution are consistent. RPL processes could be subject to QA system checks within the current institutional arrangements for QA however if a separate QA system is deemed necessary, this should be written and documented as part of the RPL policy. This could be carried out through a final institution wide committee sign off approach or an internal systems audit of decisions.

Guidelines

The institution should have procedures to ensure that RPL candidates are informed of the outcomes of their claim and that outcomes are formally recorded. The procedures should describe clearly:

1. the process to inform candidates of the outcomes of their RPL claim. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the level and amount of credit awarded;*
 - *the grounds for resubmissions and appeals;*
 - *the process for resubmissions and appeals (including timescales);*
 - *the guidance and support that will be provided if a candidate needs to resubmit a claim;*
 - *the next steps in the process following a successful claim including arrangements for entry to the programme of study and timescales.*
2. the recording of any successful RPL and/or credit transfer. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *the processes which will be undertaken to formally record successful credit transfer or RPL within the institution;*
 - *a clear description of how and where the RPL and/or credit transfer will be shown/recorded on a candidate's record/ transcript/ certificate.*

3. the process of monitoring and review of the overall institutional RPL process to ensure consistency and fairness of approach. This should include as a minimum, information about:
 - *how the monitoring and review of the overall systems will be carried out;*
 - *the responsibilities for that monitoring;*
 - *the reporting structures and how any actions/changes will be followed up.*

Further Guidance

It is important is that RPL candidates understand how and when they will be notified of a decision and what they should do next, in terms of progressing to entry to the programme of study or seek guidance on resubmission or appeals processes.

Where candidates are permitted to resubmit, institutions will need to consider the timescale by which candidates would be expected to either provide additional evidence and/or upskill or gain new experiences and offer additional support and set agreed timelines. Institutions would need to consider how this may impact on the ability of the candidate to join the next entry to the programme of study.

The institution may wish to have a similar resubmission and appeals process to that of all other programmes of study within the institution.

Consideration should be given to the grounds of an appeals so for example:

- whether appeals are permitted against the academic level or volume of credit awarded;
or
- whether an appeal is only permitted if a procedural error has occurred or due process has not been followed

Institutions may wish to consider if they would charge a further fee for resubmission/appeals.

Institutions also need to give thought to how and where outcomes of an RPL claim will be recorded both in terms of the institution's information systems, as well as for the candidate through their record, transcript or a certificate etc.

If the candidate only partially completes the new programme of study the certification point could be before the final transcript is issued to provide evidence for the candidate should they wish to transfer to another institution. This would demonstrate that their claim for RPL enabled them to successfully undertake study at an advanced level and it will then become the decision of the new institution if they will accept any of the RPL credit awarded by another institution.

The Examples of Good Practice are on the next page.

Examples of Good Practice

- Candidates are notified of the result of their claim for RPL in the same manner and timeframe as all other students of the institution are notified of acceptance/entry.
- Where credit transfer is used as a form of RPL for entry this is clearly recorded on the candidate's transcript/record and details the exact title, institution, level and volume of credit and the date of the original award. This will assist in 'preventing' double counting' credit that has already been used towards another qualification.
- Having in place a process to regularly monitor and review the operation of the RPL and credit transfer processes. This is a formal process which records the outcomes of the monitoring and review, any changes required to the process, the rationale for any changes and ensures that any recommendations are acted upon.

Glossary

Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL)	A process of reflection which identifies and accredits an individual's experience developed through exposure in life to a variety of experiences. (at home, in formal education, work or volunteering).
Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)	A process of reflection which identifies and accredits an individual's knowledge, skills, understanding and competencies that have been developed throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning.
Candidate	An individual making a claim for RPL and/or credit transfer.
Component	Smaller parts of a full programme of learning which can be assessed separately.
Credit Transfer	Takes place when an individual has gained a formal programme of study and has received formal credit and is looking to gain entry at an advanced stage or exemption from components of another programme of study where the learning outcomes of the programme of study match the learning outcomes of the new programme of study. The credit can either be subject specific or general credit if the learning is at the same MQF level.
Formal Learning	Formal learning takes place within the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers; it is assessed and leads to a recognised qualification or award. [<i>SCQF Handbook Definition 2015</i>]
Formative RPL	Takes place where the individual is looking to have knowledge, skills and competences assessed for personal or career development.
Informal Learning	Informal learning can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning. [<i>SCQF Handbook Definition 2015</i>]
Learning Outcomes	Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.
Moderation/Verification	The process to provide accuracy and consistency in marking and/or decision making
Non- Formal Learning	Non-Formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training, it may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification; for example, learning and training

	activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and through community based learning. [SCQF Handbook 2015]
Portfolio	A collection of documents which, in the case of an RPL claim, is submitted by a candidate to demonstrate competence for learning outcomes. It could include a variety of documents such as prior formal education certificates, evidence such as witness testimonies, blogs, reports, examples of work and reflective statements etc (not an exhaustive list)
Programme of Study	An award or qualification that sits on the MQF.
Recognition	Recognition is achieved when an individual can have their learning formally assessed and quality assured to successfully be admitted to or gain exemptions to components or parts of a formal programme of study through the use of learning outcomes.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	“RPL is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations as through life and work experiences” [SCQF definition 2010]
Recognition of Accredited Prior Learning (RAPL or RAPEL)	Recognition of APL or APEL is when an individual who has had their prior learning accredited then has this learning process formally assessed and is awarded MQF credit points toward an award or qualification that they are then offered exemptions or advanced entry to.
RPL for Entry	Full acceptance of an RPL claim as entry requirements onto a programme of study;
RPL for Advanced Entry	Full acceptance of a claim for entry to a programme of study with exemptions from parts of the programme
Summative RPL	Takes place where formal credit is awarded and recognised as having the same value as credit gained in formal teaching institutions.
VNFIL	The Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) is also a form of RPL and the term is used widely in Europe and features in the EU recommendation of 2012 and in the 2012 Cedefop Guidelines. In Malta this is regulated by S.L 327.432 and by MFHEA.