



Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

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kcetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Chill Chainnigh agus Cheatharlach
*Kilkenny and Carlow
Education and Training Board*

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Glossary of Terms

Access	The process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required.
Accreditation	Procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks.
CAS	Common Awards System
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
Credit	In terms of Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is for learning which has not previously been academically accredited. RPEL may be granted where there is evidence that the required learning outcomes have been achieved. Where this evidence exists, applicants may be entitled to advanced entry to a programme and/or awarded grades for the learning.
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
Exemption	Exemption exists where an applicant has already been awarded accredited certification by an awarding body such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) or other recognised colleges/institutes and awarding bodies. As this accredited certification has already been graded it is grade neutral. Exemptions may allow applicants advanced entry to a programme and/or may contribute to the achievement of the overall award.
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
Formal Learning	Formal learning occurs in an organised and structured environment (in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designed as a learning experience in terms of its structure, learning objectives, learning outcomes, time and resources.
HEI	Higher Education Institution
Informal learning	Informal learning is not organised or structured; informal learning is usually unintentional from the learner's perspective and results from participating in daily activities related to work, family or leisure, e.g. coaching a team, event management.
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Awards Centre
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications

Non Formal Learning	Non formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view but usually does not result in accreditation or certification. Non formal learning is embedded in planned activities not explicitly defined as learning e.g. on the job training or IT skills acquired in the workplace.
Progression	The process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme.
QBS	QQI Business System (an online system for registering learner/applicant for accreditation with QQI)
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland (the accrediting body for RPL)
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certified Learning is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as QQI other recognised awarding bodies both in Ireland and abroad, i.e. City and Guilds London.
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning is recognition of formal, informal and non-formal learning acquired through life or work experience; learning achieved from non-accredited bodies or certifying bodies outside of the European framework
RPL	The recognition of prior learning (RPL) describes a process used to evaluate skills and knowledge gained through life outside of formal education and training, for the purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards or learning outcomes.
Transfer	The process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill and competence acquired.

1. Introduction

This policy document contains the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning of Learners for Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) Further Education and Training (FET) Provision. Updated versions of this document will be available on the [KCETB QA Website](#). For assistance on the implementation of these policies and procedures you can contact your centre's assessment working group representative or the Quality Assurance Office (qa.info@kilkennycarlowetb.ie 056-7813098).

2. Policy statement

Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) as part of its ETB Quality Assurance Framework, is committed to working with applicants, accrediting bodies and employers for the purposes of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The RPL process allows for all learning to be recognised and validated, independent of the context in which it was achieved. RPL may be attained for formal, informal or non-formal learning. This enables documentation, access, exemption and accreditation. Participation in the RPL process offers further opportunities for access, transfer and progression to programmes in Further Education and Training.

This policy outlines how the process for RPL is conducted in KCETB. Included in the policy is:

- an outline of the roles and responsibilities of those involved
- the procedures to be followed when drafting and submitting an RPL application
- the steps involved in the RPL application
- the appeals process

3. Principles

KCETB ensures that RPL applicants are assessed in a fair, consistent and equitable manner in-line with its Assessment Policy. Principles of assessment for RPL are consistent with those applied to participants of KCETB Programmes who are assessed in the conventional manner. Assessment is standards based and the assessment process determines whether the applicant has reached the required national standards of knowledge, skill and competence for a particular minor or major award.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 sets out the statutory basis for QQI's engagement with RPL 'mainly through our responsibility to establish policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression (ATP) for providers.'¹

¹ <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/recognition-of-Prior-Learning-RPL.aspx>

The underlying principles of the KCETB RPL process include:

- Quality - all RPL application are part of the overall KCETB Quality Assurance process
- Validity - all RPL applications are judged to have achieved the relevant standard of knowledge, skill or competence required to achieve an award.
- Reliability - all RPL applications are assessed to ensure they are accurate, valid and consistent
- Fairness - all RPL applications are assessed in a fair manner
- Transparency - all RPL applications are processed in a transparent manner

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. Stakeholders central to the administration of the RPL process:

- Centre: The Centre refers to any KCETB College, Education or Training Centre.
- Centre Manager: The Centre Manager refers to the Centre Manager, Centre Director, Principal or the manager of any KCETB College or ETB Education/Training Centre.
- Independent Appeals Committee: The Independent Appeals Committee refers to the committee which examines the assessment process appeals. The committee is appointed in line with the KCETB Assessment Policy procedures for appeals.
- Programme Co-ordinator

4.2. Principle roles that support applicants through the RPL process

The key roles involved in the RPL process are:

- RPL Coordinator
- RPL mentor/facilitator
- RPL assessor

The teachers/tutors who assume these roles must be experienced or subject matter experts familiar with QQI, relevant policies and procedures around Quality Assurance and the RPL process.

The roles of mentor and assessor are interchangeable in RPL. However, in accordance with guidelines for fair and transparent assessment, an assessor should not mentor an application for a component or award for which he/she is an assessor. Similarly, a mentor should not assess an application which he/she is mentoring. Therefore, the functions of mentoring and assessing should be separated.

In keeping with these assessment guidelines an RPL Coordinator may also act as an RPL Mentor, as both of these roles are neutral.

An overview of the roles and responsibilities are outlined in Table 2 Key roles in the RPL process included in Appendix 1:

5. Criteria for making an RPL application

All RPL applicants must enrol with KCETB. They must attend a meeting in advance of making the application. All applicants must complete the required RPL form(s).

Formal Learning: For Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) the applicant must provide the original certificate for an award or component when making an application for RPCL. They should also include all relevant programme details and their results. Results notification will not suffice for an application.

6. Fees

6.1. Fee for Application

KCETB under its current guidelines does not apply any fees to applications for RPL.

6.2. Fee for Appeals

Appeals for Recognition of Prior Learning are applied in line with the KCETB Assessment Policy on fees for appeal applications which is €40.

7. Procedure

KCETB will use RPL for documentation, access, exemption and accreditation. This offers the opportunity to individuals for the validation of their prior learning and experience through the RPL Programme for the Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) and the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL). The procedures for both are outlined in Figure 1 RPL application process flow and the following sections.

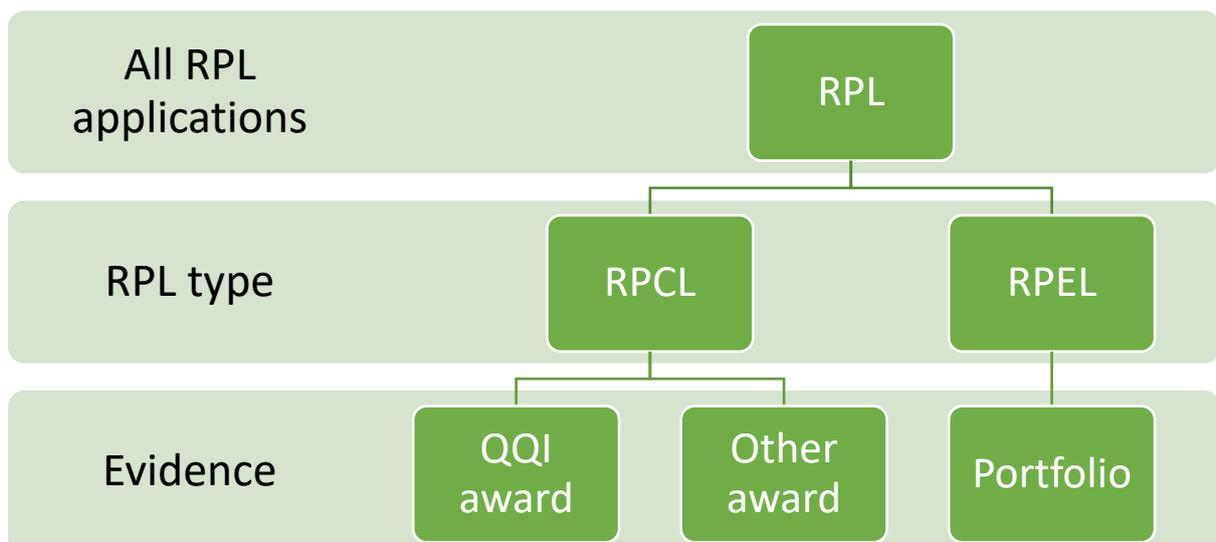


Figure 1 RPL application process flow

8. RPCL (Recognition of Prior Certified Learning)

8.1. Introduction to RPCL

RPCL can be recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications NFQ and may entitle the applicant to:

- Admission to a programme
- Advanced entry on a programme
- Exemption from a particular module/s

RPCL has 3 aspects

1. Recognition of a QQI award towards another QQI award (see 8.3)
2. Recognition of other awarding bodies (e.g. HEI, City and Guilds) towards a QQI award (see 8.4)
3. Recognition of QQI certification towards an award of other awarding bodies (see 8.5)

8.2. RPCL Application Process

In the case of exemption applications, the prior certified learning, which the applicant is basing his/her exemption on, should be at the same (or higher) NFQ level than the level the learner is seeking the exemption in. It should also indicate whether seeking recognition of other awarding bodies (Higher education institution (HE) City of Guilds, etc.) towards a QQI award. The process is outlined in Figure 2 RPCL process:

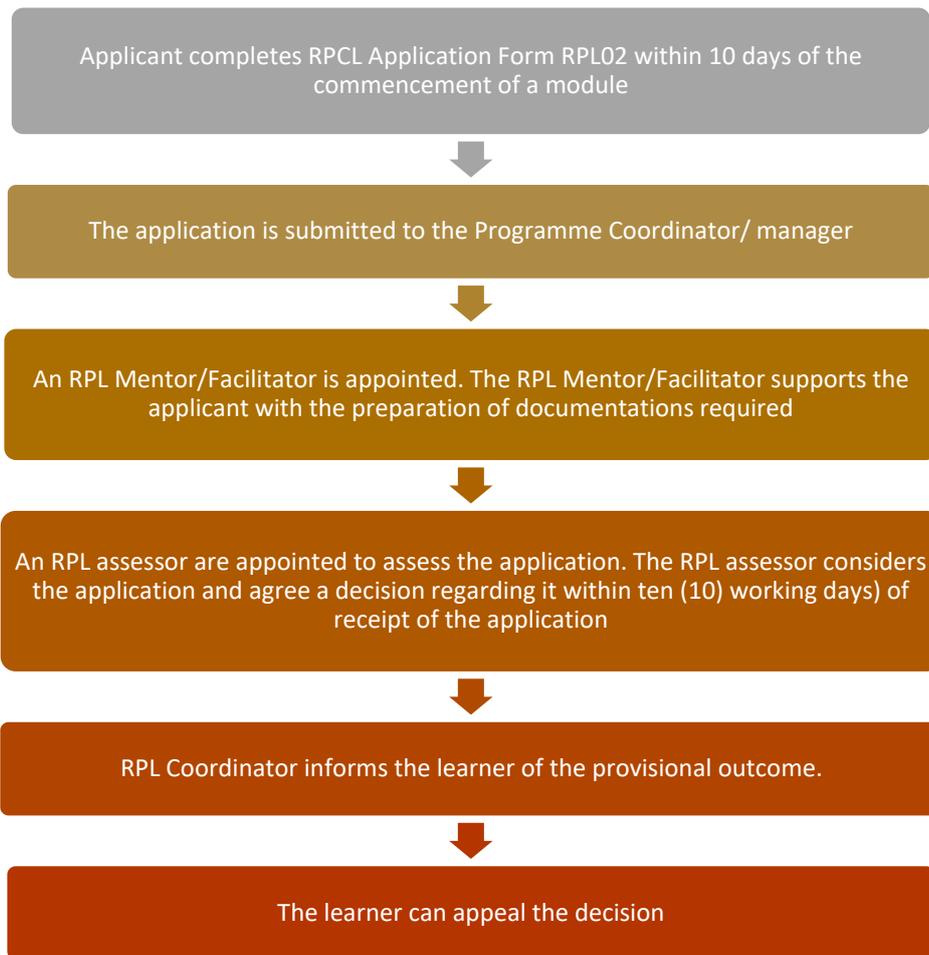


Figure 2 RPCL process

In addition to the process outlined above, the RPCL assessment should be included in the authentication processes including:

- Internal verification
- External authentication (preferably by an external authenticator familiar with RPL)

8.3. Recognition of a QQI award towards another QQI award

RPCL will recognise a previously obtained QQI award towards another QQI award if:

- A QQI component is not mapped to a Common Awards System (CAS). In this instance direct exemption using that QQI component is not possible
- A QQI (or former FETAC) component is mapped to a Common Awards System but is more than 5 years old. This however is dependent on the module. Some components can become outdated e.g. ICT.

RPCL will not apply but an exemption may be granted where:

- A QQI component maps to a CAS component and is less than 5 years old

8.4. Recognition of other awarding bodies (Higher Education Institution (HEI) City of Guilds, etc.) towards a QQI award

KCETB in line with QQI policy², recognises the value of awards made by another awarding body. In this instance RPCL may apply.

QQI has identified a list of awards to which RPCL exemptions may be applied on their website³. Where an award is not on the published list, the learner is required to provide the relevant learning programme and original transcript of results, with their application, in order to apply for RPCL.

Learners seeking Statements of Equivalence for qualifications from foreign countries will be referred to [National Academic Recognition information Centre](#) (NARIC) to have their qualifications aligned with the appropriate Irish qualification. Qualifications Recognition is the QQI body responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

8.5. 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. In this instance, RPCL will apply.

8.6. Comparing learning outcomes

When completing the RPCL process, the following should be considered:

- The learning outcomes of the prior certified learning should be comparable to the learning outcomes of the modules / programmes for which the learner is seeking exemption.
- The standard of the award and the principles of assessment should be adhered to.
- When gaps are identified in learning, supports must be put in place to address these gaps.

8.7. Exemption and grades

Prior certified learning may entitle the applicant to exemptions on a programme. RPCL does not entitle the applicant to credits and is grade neutral. As it is grade neutral it does not have a grade and does not contribute to the overall grade of the major award. As this certified learning has already been awarded credit, the applicant cannot receive credit for it again, but receives recognition in the form of an exemption.

8.8. CAS Award

Where a learner has achieved a CAS award as currently published on the QQI website, and has met the learning outcomes for that award, then the learner has achieved that award. In this instance, the 5-year rule does not apply regardless of the age of the certificate and the learner's award will be recognised by the QQI Business System (QBS), and it is not necessary

² <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Policy%20for%20Determining%20Award%20Standards.pdf>

³ <https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=exemptions>

to apply for either an exemption or RPCL. This should be documented as part of the application.

9. RPEL (Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning)

RPEL is recognition of formal, informal and non-formal learning acquired through life or work experience and learning achieved from non-accredited bodies. Every RPEL application will be individual in nature and specific to the applicant. Consideration should be given to the workload involved in preparing the portfolio against the workload involved in completing the module. This should be discussed with the learner before starting the RPEL process.

9.1. RPEL Assessment method

The assessment method for RPEL is an evidence-based portfolio of work created by the applicant. The portfolio will consist of evidence of skills, knowledge and competence gained through experiential (non-formal and informal) learning and mapped to the standards in the QQI awards specification. The evidence the learner has to submit will be based on the learning outcomes of the Major/Minor awards for which he/she is seeking credits.

9.2. RPEL Application Process

9.2.1.

The applicant completes an RPL01 RPEL Expression of Interest form and forwards to the programme coordinator/manager. This is submitted for review to the RPL mentor / facilitator. If seemed appropriate for RPEL, the process for RPEL commences and documented using RPL03 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning Application Form.

An RPL Mentor/Facilitator is assigned to support the learner through the RPEL process and in the production of the portfolio. This involves the application for access to a programme or credit for an award (major or minor) for non-formal learning gained from experience. The applicant must demonstrate that the required equivalent learning has been achieved by producing a portfolio of evidence to support the claim for access or credit.

9.2.2.

The portfolio of evidence must clearly demonstrate that the evidence of prior learning is matched to the knowledge, skills and competencies of the award learning outcomes. The portfolio should include the following:

Table 1 Portfolio requirements

Compulsory	Optional
Recorded interview with RPL Coordinator documenting evidence of skills knowledge and competency's gained in knowledge in the applicant's workplace, community and the applicant's personal context	Certificates for training and details of training
CV (Europass ⁴ CV or similar)	Samples of work (presentations, drawings, letters, minutes of meetings, documents, emails etc.)
Job description related to previous work and relevant life experiences	Testimonials and references
An RPEL Application	Reflective journal or diary entries
	Recorded discussions, group discussions or interview where appropriate
	Evidence produced through subject workshops where applicable
	Assessment tasks completed using assessment briefs to capture evidence
	Questionnaires
	Personal Learning Statements
Any other evidence that could potentially support the RPEL application.	

9.3. Assessment Process

Portfolios presented as assessment for an award must be:

- Assessed by a subject matter expert/assessor
- Internally verified
- Externally authenticated by an external authenticator familiar with RPL or a subject matter expert

9.4. Grading

All assessments in RPEL are graded as Pass Merit or Distinction and not given a mark (percentage value). These grades are entered on the QBS under RPL. Learners who do not achieve the outcomes of the awards are recorded as 'unsuccessful' or 'referred'. The criteria for grades are outlined in Figure 3 Criteria for grades.

⁴ <https://europa.eu/europass/en>

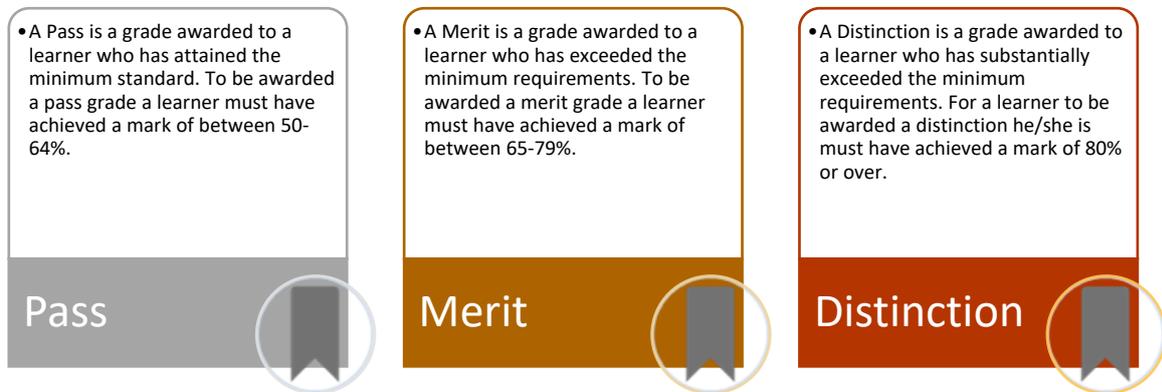


Figure 3 Criteria for grades

10. Appeals

The applicant has the right to appeal the decision in relation to RPL. The applicant can appeal the decision on the RPL application or grade awarded. All appeals must be made as per the Assessment Policy in writing using the Assessment Appeals Application Form⁵.

⁵ Available in the [KCETB Assessment Policy](#)

Supplementary documents

1. <https://www.fess.ie/images/stories/Assessment/RecognitionOfPriorLearningforQQIDec14.pdf>
2. [Assessment Reference Framework Consultative Draft: Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)](#)
3. [QQI Policy Restatement Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training; NQAI 2003, Restated 2015/QP.20 v1.0 \(c\) QQI](#)
4. [Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training; June 2005](#)
5. [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers Core; April 2016/QG1-V2 © QQI](#)
6. [Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training; November 2017/QP.17-V1.03 © QQI](#)
7. [Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers Revised 2013 \(Version 2 - revised 2018*\)](#)

Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Appendix 1 Roles and Responsibilities



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Table 2 Key roles in the RPL process

Centre Manager	RPL Coordinator	RPL Mentor/ Facilitator	RPL Assessor	Applicant
	Manages the RPL Programme in line with KCETB policies	Provide appropriate guidance and support to the applicant equivalent. This support reflects the level of support available to conventional learners at the same level in the NFQ	Examine the evidence presented by a potential applicant to determine if it is sufficient to support an application for RPL	Submit their claim for RPL on the relevant RPL Application Form to the RPL Coordinator within 10 working days of module commencement
	Ensures QA standards are maintained by liaising with the QA department in KCETB	Support applicant to understand the RPL process, award/component specifications and learning outcomes	Determine that the evidence presented is consistent with the NFQ level, the spirit and standards of an award or component.	Engage with the RPL Coordinator, RPL Mentor/Facilitator and Assessor as appropriate to complete the application
	Ensures that all staff and applicants are made aware of and adhere to RPL policy and RPL requirements	Communicate with the RPL coordinator and the assessors to ensure that the evidence reflects the learning outcomes and maps to the component specification	Compares the learning outcomes of the previously certified award to modules/programme where the applicant is seeking exemption in RPCL	Compile a EuroPass CV, or similar
	Raises awareness around RPL and the advantages of RPL and endeavours to create a community of practice	Support the applicant to identify and categorise evidence for a specific component/award	Assessing submitted assessment materials/portfolio in accordance with KCETB Quality Assurance policies and guidelines on the assessment,	Provide all evidence to support an application

Centre Manager	RPL Coordinator	RPL Mentor/ Facilitator	RPL Assessor	Applicant
			the RPL process and the QQI award standard.	
	<p>Liaises with the RPL Assessor at the outset, to ensure that the evidence presented by a potential applicant is sufficient to support an application for RPL and is appropriate to the spirit, standards and level of an award</p>	<p>Liaise between assessor and applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving instruction and feedback from assessors • Bringing queries from applicant to assessor 	<p>Design assessment rubrics to demonstrate the standards and grading of an award/component</p>	<p>For RPCL original certificates must be submitted along with programme details and results.</p>
	<p>Supports the applicant through the application process</p>	<p>Guide and support the applicant to produce their portfolio of evidence under assessment guidelines</p>	<p>Design assessment briefs that reflect the learning outcomes and evidence; integrating learning outcomes where appropriate. Develop best practice by sharing developed assessment briefs.</p>	<p>Map the evidence to the corresponding learning outcome</p>
	<p>Provides guidance and support to the RPL team and to applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For RPEL in relation to portfolio preparation • For RPCL relating to mapping of 		<p>Facilitate workshops to capture gaps in learning</p>	

Centre Manager	RPL Coordinator	RPL Mentor/ Facilitator	RPL Assessor	Applicant
	component Learning Outcomes to assessment standards			
	Acts as a liaison between mentor/ facilitators, assessors and applicants		Communicate effectively with the RPL team	
	Informs the applicant of the result of their application			
	Identification and documentation of the RPL process through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interviewing the prospective candidates to assess suitability for the programme ○ Recording and completing the skills checker, skills clustering questionnaire and necessary paperwork with applicants ○ Records Data: Applications, appeals, assessment 			

Centre Manager	RPL Coordinator	RPL Mentor/ Facilitator	RPL Assessor	Applicant
	outcomes and access, transfer and progression routes for applicants			
	Ensures pathways for access, transfer and progression to programmes in Further Education and Training are explored with the applicants at the conclusion of the RPL process			
	Supports the applicant in the event of an appeal application and informs applicant of the outcome			