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Interim Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (ELC) V1

Introduction

This Interim Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy for ELC Awards is for use pending the development and approval of an RPL Policy and related procedures. This interim policy will cease to be operational once DDLETB's RPL Policy has been approved.

1. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interim policy is to provide a framework for the recognition of prior learning for learners in the Early Learning and Care (ELC) (non-CAS) programme. This interim policy aims to provide a rationale for a business case that sets out resources and funding requirements for a DDLETB FET-wide policy.

This policy sets out the principles and requirements for fair and transparent recognition of prior learning towards the ELC awards within DDLETB.

The policy seeks to ensure that RPL in DDLETB is carried out in line with relevant statutory, regulatory and strategic requirements including:

- a. Education and Training Act 2012
- b. Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI, 2016)
- c. Restatement of Access, Transfer and Progression (2015) (QQI, 2015)
- d. Operational Guidelines on the Recognition of Prior Learning for Further and Higher Education, 2005 (QQI, 2005)
- e. SOLAS Statement of Strategy 2020-2024 (SOLAS, 2020)
- f. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Department of Education and Skills, 2016)
- g. DDLETB Statement of Strategy, 2022-2026 (Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board, 2022)
- h. European Guidelines for Validating non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2023)

2. Scope Statement

This Interim Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy is for the Early Learning and Care awards

- Level 5 Certificate in Early Learning and Care 5M21473
- Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care 6M21471.

3. Definitions of terms used in this policy

Learning is acquired in different ways. The following definitions are taken from Cedefop (Cedefop, 2024).

Formal learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in an education or training institution or a company) and is explicitly designated as learning in terms of learning objectives, time or resources. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification (an award).
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Non-formal learning	Learning that is embedded in planned activities, where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher/trainer relationships). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.
Informal learning	Learning that is not explicitly designated as learning activities in terms of learning objectives, time or resources (e.g. in work, family or leisure). Informal learning may be unintentional from the learner's point of view. It can also be referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the term used by DDLETB when referring generally to processes for recognising all prior learning, including certified and experiential learning.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	A process that formally identifies, assesses and acknowledges prior learning. The process links the prior learning to learning outcomes, or standards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)	A process that recognises learning that has previously been linked to an award.
Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)	A process that recognises learning that has not previously been linked to an award.

Recognition of prior learning can have different purposes. RPL can be considered for the following purposes in the ELC programme.

Access	Entry to a programme. RPL can be facilitated for a learner who cannot demonstrate the achievement of learning associated with the entry requirements through formal means, but who can demonstrate their readiness to participate on the programme based on their life experience, educational experience, work or community experience.
Advanced entry	Entry to a programme at a stage beyond the principal entry stage. In the case of the Early Learning and Care programme, advanced entry is entry directly to Stage 2 (Level 6). Advanced entry can be granted when a learner provides evidence of having achieved the learning outcomes associated with Stage 1 (Level 5).
Credits	Credit refers to part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes that has been assessed and validated, according to an agreed standard, and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications. Credit is awarded when an individual has achieved the expected learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate means. Credit is expressed in quantitative value (credits) demonstrating the estimated workload a learner typically needs for achieving learning outcomes. Credits in the ELC programme refers to one or more modules.
Certification	The process of issuing a certificate, diploma or title formally attesting that a set of learning outcomes acquired by an individual have been assessed by a competent body against a predefined standard. In the case of the ELC

	programme, certification refers to entering a learner for certification of the major award at either Level 5 or Level 6.
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Other terms are relevant to this policy.

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle).
Foreign qualifications	Qualifications that have been achieved by a learner in another country. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) maintains a list of recognised qualifications for working in early years settings. This list includes qualifications available in other countries that are recognised in Ireland for this purpose. The ELC programme refers to this list to assist with claims for RPL.
RPL evidence	Material which provides support of an applicant’s claim of prior learning benchmarked against a target set of learning outcomes in the ELC programme.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Principles and practices that can help practitioners address variability in their learner cohorts and reduce barriers to learning by building flexibility, accessibility, learner voice, and choice in the fabric of the learning interactions they design (SOLAS, ETBI, Ahead, 2021). UDL approaches to assessment are particularly suitable to RPL.

4. Principles of Assessment

4.1 Principles of assessment

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, 2013)

Central to quality assured assessment is the assumption that learners 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 principles of assessment apply to RPL. They are based on the QQI (2013) principles for assessment.

4.1.1 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)
- Learners can produce evidence which can be measured against the award standard

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- Assessors can make accurate assessment decisions
 - Assessment is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it

4.1.2 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
- Learner evidence is reliable
- Results are consistent across various assessors, contexts, conditions and learners over time

4.1.3 Fairness

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

4.1.4 Quality

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

4.1.5 Transparency

Transparency in assessment ensures that assessment policy and procedures provide clarity to all relevant stakeholders.

4.2 Principles of assessment in relation to RPL

In addition to the above, RPL evidence should also align with the following principles:

4.2.1 Authenticity

The RPL mentor must be satisfied that the RPL 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.).

4.2.2 Relevance

The evidence presented must be linked to the learning outcomes of the award being sought.

4.2.3 Currency

The applicant must still possess the skills and knowledge claimed i.e., the skills and knowledge must be current.

4.2.4 Sufficiency

Sufficient evidence must be provided to satisfy the requirements of the learning outcomes and the standard of the award.

5 Policy Statement

At DDLETB we recognise the value and importance of prior learning experiences of our learners.

This interim policy aims to provide an equitable, learner-centred, UDL approach to RPL in acknowledgement of the unique profile of individual RPL applicants. It aims to ensure that learners are given recognition for their previous learning experiences, whether they were acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning, regardless of where or how they were acquired.

The policy is aimed at facilitating **access** and **advanced entry, credits** for whole modules, and **certification** in relation to the Early Learning and Care programmes and awards. Recognition will be underpinned by the assessment principles that apply to all assessment in DDET and further underscored by those principles of assessment that relate specifically to RPL.

DDLETB will accept and consider RPL applications for the ELC award in line with the organisation's strategic direction and subject to the availability of resources.

Where DDLETB graduates apply for consideration for RPL in other organisations, DDLETB will facilitate their requests for programme documentation in support of their claims. This will be done with due consideration for intellectual property rights and security of programme documentation and carried out through the QA Unit.

6 Key Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 RPL Applicant

The applicant is claiming recognition for their prior learning. The applicant must state their interest in RPL to the ELC course coordinator at the earliest opportunity in order to avail of timely support.

The applicant must be registered as a learner on a relevant DDLETB course or become registered upon successful application for RPL.

6.2 Guidance

DDLETB staff who provide educational guidance to learners will ensure that learners have access to impartial, up-to-date information, guidance and support in their education and career planning, indicating where RPL may be applicable. The guidance staff will refer the learner to the ELC course coordinator in a timely manner for queries and support concerning the RPL process.

6.3 RPL Coordinator/ion

The RPL coordinator will be a DDLETB staff member, with responsibility for coordinating RPL applications. They will abide by this policy and the relevant procedures in order to enable learners avail of fair, transparent and timely RPL processes. The coordinator will liaise with the learner, the relevant centres, the mentor and assessor as appropriate and in a timely manner.

6.4 RPL Mentor

The mentor will be a DDLETB staff member. Once allocated to an applicant, they will abide by this policy and the relevant procedures, in order to support the applicant through the RPL process. The

mentor will liaise with the RPL Coordinator, RPL Assessor and Learner as appropriate and in a timely manner.

6.5 RPL Assessor

The RPL assessor will be a DDLETB staff member, suitably qualified and experienced in the field in which they are assessing RPL evidence. They will abide by this policy and the relevant procedures in order to assess the RPL applicant's evidence in a fair and transparent manner. The assessor will liaise with the RPL Coordinator and RPL mentor as appropriate and in a timely manner. They may also be required to liaise with the learner where appropriate.

6.6 All DDLETB FET staff

DDLETB staff in centres delivering ELC, will make themselves aware of the interim policy and procedure for RPL (ELC awards).

DDLETB staff will contact the QA Unit for assistance when asked by a DDLETB learner/graduate for programme documentation in support of an RPL application in another organisation.

7 Exceptions to this Policy

Until the DDLETB RPL Policy is in place, this interim policy covers only the Early Learning and Care awards for which DDLETB has validated programmes.

8 Accessibility and storage

This policy will be stored on the QA Hub and will be publicly accessible at www.qa.ddletb.ie.

9 Related documentation

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following to enable the policy action to be implemented:

1. The programme documentation for the Early Learning and Care programme
2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Procedure
3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Application Form

10 Contact

Any queries regarding this policy should be directed to quality@ddletb.ie.

11 Policy Review

This interim policy is scheduled for review from:

- September 2024 in the context of developing the DDLETB RPL Policy.

12 References

- Cedefop. (2023). *European Guidelines for Validating Non-Formal and Informal Learning*. (3rd ed.).
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- SOLAS. (2020). *Future FET: Transforming Learning. The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024*.
- SOLAS, ETBI, Ahead. (2021). *UDL for FET Practitioners: Guidance for Implementing Universal Design for Learning in Irish Further Education and Training*.