

# An Irish perspective on RPL in Higher Education

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- What would you like to gain from this session ?

- National
    - Significant unemployment rates, economic challenges
    - Higher Education role in developing economic and social value – employment, skills needs, enterprise development, cultural interactions
  
  - Institutional
    - Academic – relevancy and currency of learning
    - Knowledge creation and application
    - Diversity of missions
  
  - National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 calls for:
    - ..higher education institutions to
      - build a modular system of learning outcomes including a focus on the competences required for the workforce of the future*
- \* We have no national RPL strategy or policy for higher education in Ireland\**

## Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global

Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility of qualifications, nationally and internationally.



- **NFQ** Irish National Framework of Qualifications
- **EQF** European Qualifications Framework
- **QF-EHEA** Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

# Research sample by Institution type



	University	IOT	Constituent college of university with Compact*	Other	Total number
<b>Total research sample</b>	7	14	3	14	<b>38</b>
<b>Publicly available information</b>	7	14	2	12	<b>35</b>
<b>RPL Policy available</b>	5	9		2	<b>16</b>
<b>HEA Compact</b>	7	14	3	2	<b>26</b>
<b>Participated in Research</b>	5	11	1	5	<b>22</b>

\*In the context of institutional compacts, constituent colleges of universities are those who are linked in the governance structures of a university but have established their own institutional compact agreement with the HEA.

- Some Common Features:
  - Explicit procedures and scope for the incorporation of RPL into programmes, modules, assessment within a higher education institution
  - Explicitly stated policy requirements on mechanisms by which RPL fits within the general operations of the institution and how it is to be managed within such a system
  - The use of transferable standards including learning and programme outcomes and national framework level descriptors
  - Role division, responsibilities of the institution, staff members, and the learner

- Academic rigour through quality assurance procedures which are clear and transparent to all stakeholders
- Integration of RPL within existing structures including student supports
- Linkages with national and local policy and procedures through references to published position papers
- Limitation and exceptions of the system within the individual institutions or sub-sections of the institutions

# Main conclusions of the study



- Some notable organic developments of practice already exist which can provide benchmarks and guidance for others with less developed processes
- Development of RPL nationally is not limited to higher education as was evident within the professional bodies and employer representative organisations
- There is a general understanding of what constitutes RPL however there is an absence of clarity and a commonly agreed definition of RPL in higher education in Ireland
- Records are maintained by some providers but comparable data and measurable indicators of activity are not currently available across the sector



- There are positive developments at a national and institution level, however alignment between national level and individual institution efforts is not clear
- Institutions have invested time in developing systems to support RPL internally. In some cases there is a variation between stated policies and actual implementation
- In maintaining the quality assurance and robust systems of assessment, staff development for the implementation of RPL is not as proactively supported as it could be

# Introduction to Recognition of Prior Learning in CIT

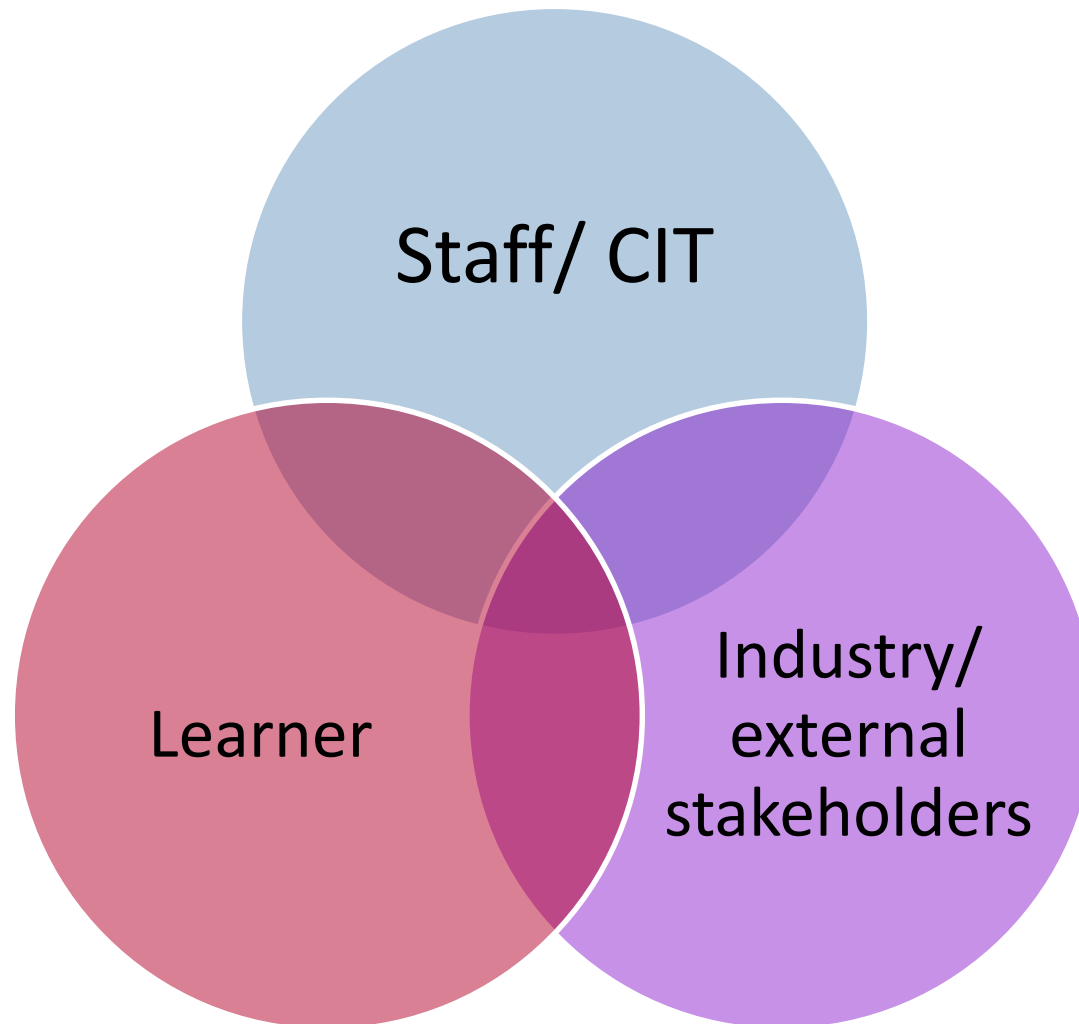


- Recognition for what someone knows prior to registering on a course in CIT
- Began in 1996 as an EU project
- In 1999 it was integrated into the main functions of the institute with one dedicated resource.
- Started slowly , 50 cases in 2000 → 600 + cases in 2014.
- In 2003 another resource was added to the area of RPL
- Involved in a number of EU projects in areas related to RPL (eportfolios) , National projects (Strategic Innovation Fund) throughout the years, NFTLHE , QQI, Erasmus +

# RPL in CIT

- Centrally located and managed
- Applicable to all courses, at all levels and in all disciplines
- Recognition is given to informal, non formal and formal learning (evidence of learning and not experience per se)
- Can be used for advanced entry beyond year 1 , individual module exemptions or a full award (experiential learning )

# How CIT built a sustainable RPL model





Learner

[www.cit.ie/rpl](http://www.cit.ie/rpl)

<http://courses.cit.ie>

### Who is the student ? – mature student , ex drop out, asylum seeker

- CIT has adopted a learner-centred approach so RPL is available at all levels in all disciplines across the institute.
- Central policy
- Central support
- Considered in module development – Learning outcomes and programme outcomes
- Assessment methodologies – learning portfolio
- Resources

### Student information


- Information and guidance
- Website
- Prospectus
- Mature Student evenings
- CPD evenings in September for each faculty
- Learning Clinics with industry
- Conferences and information sessions with those in the further education sector
- Access office for the mature students and those disadvantaged
- One dedicated resource to assist in portfolio development
  - Student workshops
  - Individual appointments



## Staff/ CIT

### **CIT / Staff**

- RPL working group from across the institute
- RPL resources on intranet (assessment, guidelines)
- Training and Development – Assessment of prior learning and RPL generally
- RPL part of the Masters in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
- Own CPD
- Precedence Database
- Good links across the institute and up and down the institutional hierarchy – open communication
- Bi-annual review and revision of information, processes and procedures if required
- Engage within and outside the institution
- Reusable resources



Industry/  
external  
stakeholders

## Industry / external stakeholders

- Learning clinic service
- Customised course development including RPL / WBL
- Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) recording interactions
- CIT Extended Campus (RPL unit located within this office)
- Cohort approach

# Benefits of having RPL



## Student

- Value their learning
- Empowerment
- Moving forward in their learning journey
- Marketing of the institution

## Institution

- Challenges the institution on where learning happens and how it can be gained
- Learning and Programme outcomes
- Assessment
- Encourages reflection on our systems, processes, programmes

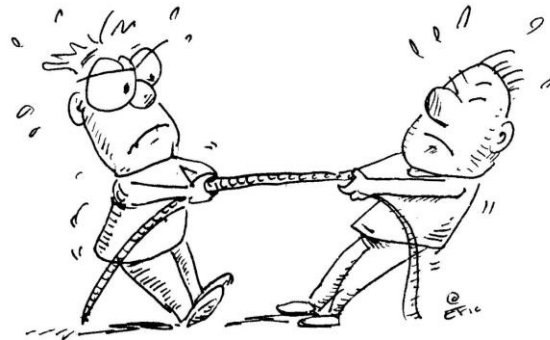
## Society

- Fostering a learning society
- Building relationships and mutual understanding with employers
- Mature learners, ex drop outs, asylum seekers, refugees



## Hinder RPL Success

- \* Allow a fragmented system to develop – within and between faculties
- \* Unwarranted fear that RPL diminishes or threatens Quality Assurance
- \* Creating a system which runs outside the central system(s) so it is seen as inferior as it is being treated differently
- \* Culture – Value, Belief and Assumptions
- \* Commitment of the institution
- \* Structures & Support
- \* Feedback and Evaluation



## Foster RPL Success

- \* One consistent policy
- \* Communication
- \* Involve those who will be implementing the system in developing it
- \* Training and Development
- \* Integrate it into your current systems and policies
- \* Supports - Clear processes, templates, personnel
- \* Reflect and revise

# Thank you

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