

LMETB RAA Recognition of Prior Learning RPL Policy

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Document Title/Reference	LMETB RPL Policy for RAA Programme
Purpose	The purpose of these guidelines is to assist FET Centre managers in the quality assured process of Recognition of Prior Learning.
Scope	These guidelines apply to all further education and training programmes, including Apprenticeships provided by LMETB FET centres or by organisations funded by LMETB to provide further education and training,
Contents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction, Policy statement and Principles 2. Roles and Responsibilities 3. RPL overview 4. Previously Achieved QQI CAS Awards 5. Exemptions 6. RPCL Recognition of Prior Certified Learning 7. RPEL Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning 8. Information for Apprentices 9. Work Placement 10. Supplementary Documents 11. Key Roles in the RPL Process <p>Appendix E relates specifically to Apprenticeship Programme</p>
Related Policies	<p>LMETB assessment procedures LMETB Assessment Appeals Process QA Apprenticeship code of Practice</p>
Audience & Communication	Applicable to all staff and apprentices of LMETB. This procedure will be made available on the LMETB website.
Policy/Procedure Owner & Implementation	The Policy owner is the CE of LMETB. It is the responsibility of the QA sub-committee and individual PLC colleges and FET centres, Principal/Director/Centre Managers to ensure the policy/procedure is implemented.

Glossary of Terms

Access	The process by which apprentices 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.
Award class	The NFQ's four main award classes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major • Minor • Special purpose • Supplemental <p>In addition, the terms 'compound' and 'component' are also often used to characterise CAS awards. The term component or 'component award' is synonymous with the NFQ term 'minor award'. A compound award is an award with prescribed component awards. It may be a major, supplemental, or special purpose award.</p>
Award Specification	The award specification is produced by the awarding body to provide information on the particular award. The specification states the purpose of the award, the title, the level, includes all the learning outcomes and information on assessment.
CAS	The Common Awards System (CAS) is a system of further education and training awards and awards standards based on learning outcomes.
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
<i>Credit</i>	<i>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.</i>
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 apprentice's perspective and results from participating in daily activities related to work, family, or leisure, e.g., coaching a team, event management.
Module Descriptor	The module descriptor is prepared by the provider and validated by the awarding body. It outlines the objectives, content, and specific assessment criteria. It is designed for taught provision.
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Awards Centre
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
Non formal learning	Non formal learning is intentional from the apprentice'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 apprentices may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme.
QBS	QQI Business System (an online system for registering apprentice/applicant for accreditation with QQI)
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certified Learning is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as QQI or 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. This is the generic term used in LMETB.

Transfer

The process by which apprentices may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill and competence acquired.

Introduction

This policy document contains the Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning of Apprentices for Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) Further Education and Training (FET) Provision including New RAA Apprenticeship Programme (post 2016). Updated versions of this document will be available on the LMETB website. For assistance on the implementation of the policy you can contact your RAA National Programme Manager or in the case of policy queries, please contact the TSO/QA Office within the ETB.

Policy Statement

Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) 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.

With reference to the New National Apprenticeship programme, the RAA, Robotics and Automation Apprenticeship programme, Level 6; applicants may also submit applications for RPL. Applicants who do not meet the minimum entry requirements for the RAA Programme may access the programme if they have a minimum of two year's relevant experience of working in the Robotics and Automation industry, this is specified in the Admissions Policy.

This policy document follows the specific guidance provided to RAA applicants on the process of RPL that is given in the RAA QAP. A link to this document is available [here](#).

A link to Appendix E of the QAP containing RPL documentation is available [here](#).

This policy outlines how the process for RPL is conducted in LMETB. 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

Principles

LMETB ensures consistent decision-making in respect of all RPL applicants, both at the application stage and the assessment stage.

- At the application stage, RPL applicants must present sufficient evidence of their prior learning before they are accepted for the RPL process.
- At the assessment stage, principles of assessment for RPL are consistent with those applied to participants of LMETB 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.

RPL can be used for all awarding bodies. At LMETB, the majority of awards are accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). QQI's position on RPL is recognised on their website:

*'Recognition of Prior Learning has been integrated into the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and the National Skills Strategy, while the Programme for Government, Our Shared Future commits to 'develop and implement a standardised system of accreditation of prior learning taking account of previous education, skills, work experience and engagement in society.'*¹

LMETB delivers programmes for awards accredited by many awarding bodies. The terminology used by these awarding bodies may be different. For example, in the UK the terms used are:

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- Prior certificated learning (APCL)
- Prior experiential learning (APEL)

The LMETB RPL policy and procedures can be adapted for use in conjunction with any awarding body's RPL and Quality Assurance procedures. Any additional RPL requirements not covered by LMETB's RPL policy, must be complied with.

¹ <https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/qqi-awards/recognition-of-prior-learning-provider>

RPL can be used for programmes validated by LMETB and also for QQI awards that are current, but not necessarily validated by LMETB. In both cases the award specification rather than the programme descriptor is used.

- The underlying principles of the LMETB RPL process include:
- Quality - all RPL applications are part of the overall LMETB 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

Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholders central to the RPL process:

- Centre: The Centre refers to any LMETB College, Education or Training Centre.
- Centre Manager: The Centre Manager refers to the Centre Manager, Centre Coordinator, Principal, Deputy Principal or the manager of any LMETB College or ETB Education/Training Centre.
- Programme Co-ordinator: The person who co-ordinates the applicable programme in the centre, this may also be the centre manager or Deputy Principal or person with responsibility for QA at centre level. In the case of the RAA Programme, this is the RAA National Programme Manager (Co-ordinating Provider, LMETB) who assumes overall responsibility for the RAA Programme. In the case of other ETBs, that is, collaborating providers the RAA Programme Leader assumes responsibility for the day to day running of the RAA in their ETB. There is regular collaboration and communication between RAA Programme Leaders, Instructors/Tutors/Lecturers/Contracted Trainers/Authorised Officers and the National Programme Manager based at LMETB.

Principal roles that support applicants through the RPL process

RPL applications are reviewed, co-ordinated and processed at the relevant LMETB centre by an RPL team which involve a number of roles. The key roles involved in the RPL process are:

- RPL Co-ordinator, or designated staff member at each Centre, the RAA National Programme Manager and the RAA Programme Leader in the collaborating provider.
- RPL Mentor (a Designated staff member) at Centre level

- RPL Assessor (a Designated staff member/SME/Tutor/Trained IV Assessor, at centre level) [The Instructors/Tutors/Lecturers/Contracted Trainers](#) who assume the role of RPL Assessor must be a subject matter expert in the area being requested for RPL.

All staff involved in the RPL process must be familiar with LMETB policies and procedures around Quality Assurance and the RPL process. A number of LMETB staff will have received specific RPL training to aid understanding of the policy and procedure.

The functions of mentoring and assessing should be separated 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.

In keeping with these assessment guidelines an RPL Co-ordinator or designated centre staff member may also act as an RPL Mentor within an LMETB centre, as both of these roles are neutral.

The following procedure relates specifically to the RPL procedure for the RAA apprenticeship.

RAA RPL Overview

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term for mechanisms for assessing prior learning that are used in the awarding of credit/exemptions to apprentices based on demonstrated learning that has occurred prior to admission.

LMETB, as Co-ordinating Provider, is committed to utilizing RPL as an instrument for determining standard access equivalences and for the award of credit or exemptions to apprentices with qualifications or prior experience in the area.

LMETB recognize that knowledge, skills, and competencies can be acquired from a range of learning experiences, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. This is in line with the aims of the NFAQ to recognize all learning achievements by supporting the development of alternative pathways to qualifications (or awards) and by facilitating the recognition of prior learning.

RPL concerns learning that has taken place but has not necessarily been assessed or measured and may be used as a supplement or alternative to formal learning for programme admission. It is the responsibility of RPL applicants to provide sufficient evidence to enable such a determination to be made.

This prior learning can be certified or experiential (non-certified).

- Prior Certified Learning is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) or other state recognized universities, colleges/institutes. Prior certified learning can also include qualifications awarded by third parties, such as the City & Guilds of London Institute.
- Prior Experiential Learning (Non-Certified Learning) is learning acquired through experience or learning achieved from non-accredited bodies, e.g., learning acquired in the workplace, learning gained from voluntary/community activities or learning gained from experience working in the home.

LMETB, as Co-ordinating Provider, in conjunction with Collaborating Providers, will ensure that all apprentice applicants are made aware of the potential benefits of RPL. Appropriate support services relating to portfolio preparation shall be made available within the ETBs to interested apprentices.

Further details on the policy and procedures for the management and operation of RPL are attached in Appendix E.

Full details on the procedure for the management and operation of RPL for the RAA programme are detailed below; this policy and procedure can also be accessed in Appendix E of the RAA QAP.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedures RPL Roles and Responsibilities The National Programme Manager

The National Programme Manager must ensure that all staff and apprentices are made aware of:

- the existence of an RPL policy and RPL requirements
- the potential benefits of RPL
- the appropriate support relating to portfolio preparation (RPEL only)
- the appropriate support relating to mapping of outcomes to assessment standards (RPCL only)

The National Programme Manager must inform the apprentice of the outcome of the RPL decision.

The National Programme Manager must also submit any appeals application to the Independent Appeals Committee and inform the apprentice of the outcome of the appeals application.

The Apprentice

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

It is the apprentice's responsibility to apply for the RPCL. Apprentices must submit their application on the RPL Application Form (see Appendix 1) to the National Programme Manager within a reasonable timeframe (recommended timeframe: ten (10) working days) of the module commencement.

Apprentices should also include original certificates, results, programme details and, where possible, learning outcomes of certified modules completed. Apprentices should be advised to participate in the

module(s) until a decision has been made (and written confirmation received) on whether to grant the exemption or not (in line with the individual Centre policy).

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

It is the apprentice's responsibility to apply for the RPEL. Apprentices must submit their claim on the RPL Application Form (Appendix 1) to their National Programme Manager within a reasonable timeframe (recommended timeframe: ten (10) working days) of the module commencement.

It is the apprentice's responsibility to gather and present the evidence required for assessment according to the instructions given by the RPL Mentor/Facilitator, evidence may include, but is not limited to: CV, references, certificates or testimonials, products or samples, job descriptions and/ or evaluations, evidence of attendance at training courses or workplace assessments. Evidence for assessment may be presented in a Portfolio of Evidence and mapped to the requirements of the award for which the exemption is being sought.

Candidates wishing to avail of RPL for Experiential Learning must have a minimum of two years' experience in the Robotics and Automation industry. The suitability, validity and relevance of industry experience is to be decided by the National Programme Manager together with the Subject Matter Expert (SME)/Contracted Trainer/Lecturer .

The RPL Assessor

The RPL assessor will be a suitably qualified, experienced assessor and subject matter expert with ability to assess both Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

The RPL assessor is appointed by the ETB.

The RPL assessor is responsible for assessing submitted assessment materials/portfolio in accordance with RPL process and the award standard.

Independent Appeals Committee

An Independent Appeals Committee must:

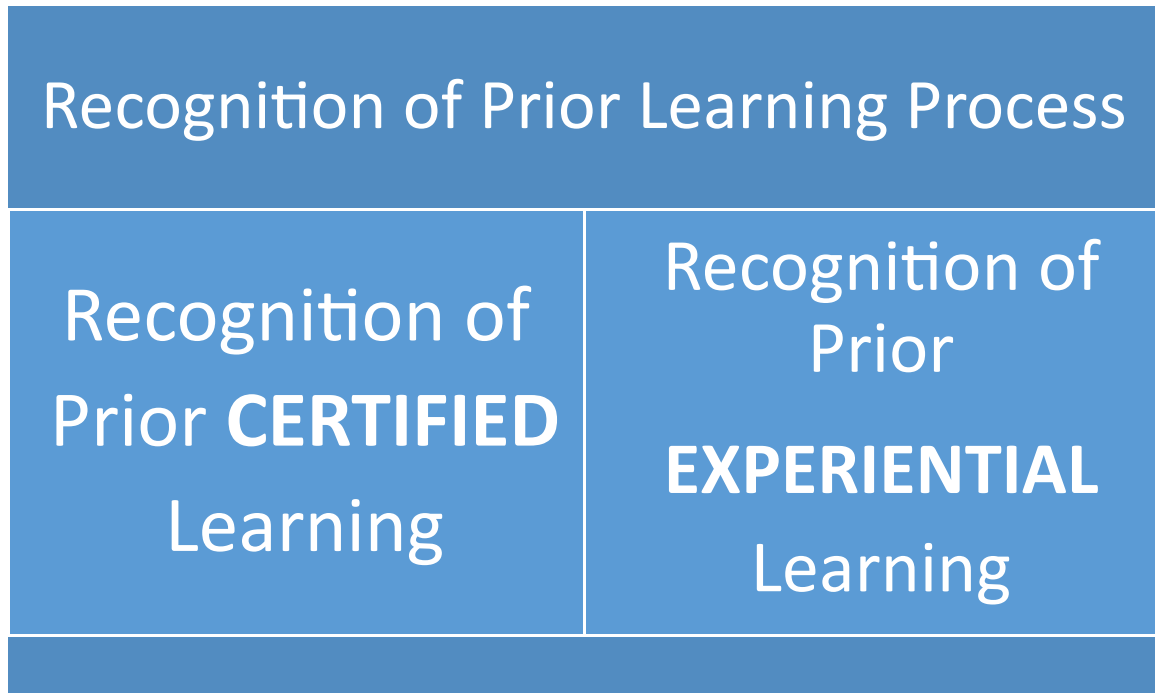
- Examine the apprentice appeal on RPL application outcome
- Investigate whether relevant assessment procedures were followed
- Make a decision on the appeal

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process

As outlined in Figure 1.1, the RPL process can follow the:

- Recognition of Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL) process (See Section 3.4 for definition and Section 6 for process) and/or
- Recognition of Prior EXPERIENTIAL Learning (RPEL) process (See Section 3.5 for definition and Section 7 for process)

Figure 1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning



Recognition of Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL) Process

RPCL is learning that has already been accredited by an awarding body such as QQI or other recognised universities, colleges/institutes, and awarding bodies. Prior certified learning can also include qualifications awarded by bodies abroad, such as the City & Guilds of London Institute.

This prior learning can be recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and may entitle the apprentice to:

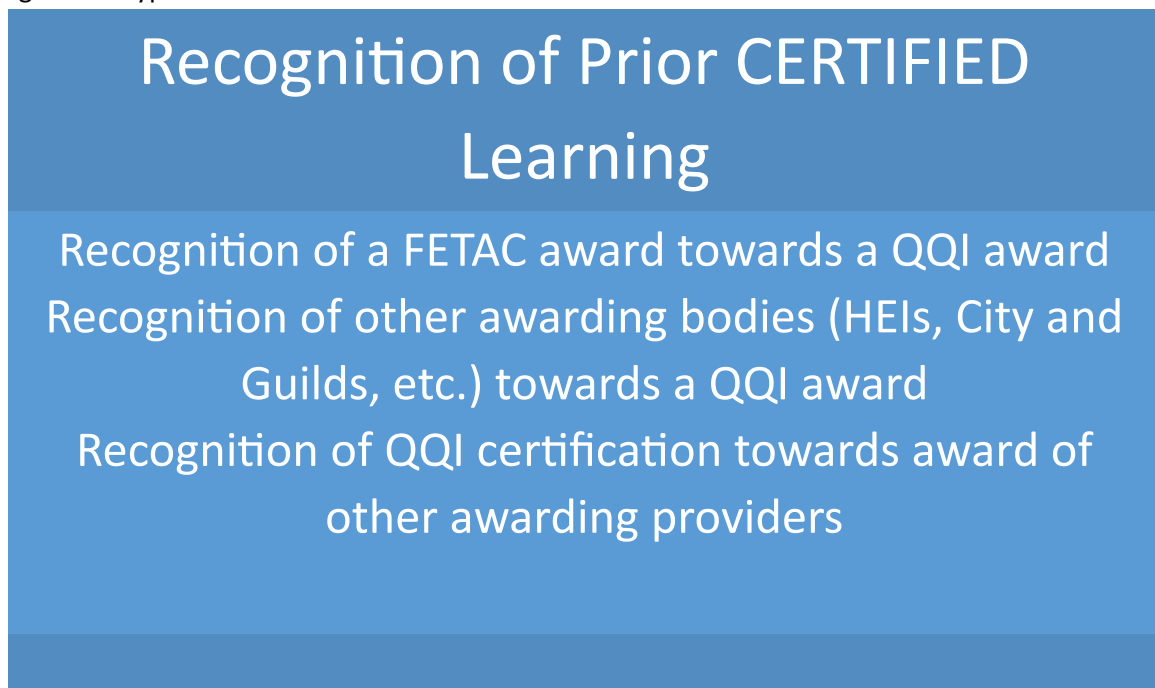
- Admission to a programme or programme of study
- Advanced entry on the programme
- Exemptions from some parts of a programme

QQI (2015) provide details regarding exemptions for the Purpose of a Compound (Major/Special Purpose/Supplemental) Award.

Types of RPCL

There are 3 types of RPCL considered in this process (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 Types of RPCL



Recognition of a Further Education and Training Awards Committee (FETAC) award towards a QQI award

“Where a FETAC component is not mapped to a CAS (Common Award System) component, then direct exemption using that FETAC component is not possible” (QQI, 2015, p.1). In this instance, RPCL will apply.

Where a Further Education and Training Awards Committee (FETAC) component is mapped to a CAS component, but is more than 5 years old, then an exemption is not possible, and RPCL will apply.

Where a FETAC component is mapped to a CAS component and is less than 5 years old, then an exemption is possible, and RPCL will not apply.

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

If the learning for which recognition is sought for a QQI award, is certified outside of CAS, RPCL will apply. The following must be considered as part of this process (see Table 1.1).

Comparison of Learning Outcomes	It is recommended that the RPL assessor compares the learning outcomes of the prior certified learning to the learning outcomes of the module(s)/programme in which the apprentice is seeking the exemption(s): this must be completed in line with the provider's RPL policy while adhering to the award standard and principles of assessment. Gaps in learning may be identified and supports put in place to address these gaps.
Currency of RPCL	It is recommended that the RPCL must have been achieved in an appropriate timeframe (timeframe dependent on discipline) and in line with the provider's RPL policy. For example, ICT of ten years ago is of limited benefit today on a current programme, while some culinary training outcomes or communication skills may be more timeless.

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

QQI recognises the value of awards made by another awarding body where the awarding body is:

- nationally recognised in its own country
- operating a quality assured awarding process (QQI, 2018)

QQI has identified a listing of awards to which RPCL may be applied (QQI, 2018). Where an award is not on the published list, the apprentice is required to provide the relevant learning programme and original transcript of results, with their application, in order to apply for RPCL.

Apprentices seeking *Statements of Equivalence* for foreign qualifications may be referred to National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)

(<http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions>) to have their qualifications aligned with the appropriate Irish qualification. Qualifications Recognition is the QQI body responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

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.

RPL applications for access to a programme:

Collaborating ETBs shall adjudicate on applications from potential apprentices seeking to use RPL as a method of satisfying entry requirements to a new National Apprenticeship programme. Such adjudication shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy.

RPL applications seeking exemption(s) or advanced entry to a new national apprenticeship programme(s):

- a) Applications may be made seeking exemption(s) or advanced entry through either the provisions of Recognition for Prior Certified Learning (RPCL), as described in Section 2 below, or Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL), as described in Section 3 below, or a combination of both.
- b) Advanced entry equates to the granting of sufficient exemptions/credit covering the early stage(s) of a programme. This process is adjudicated on by the Co-ordinating ETB through the National Programme Board.
- c) Applications for advanced entry or exemptions may only be considered in the case of an apprenticeship programme with duration longer than two years.
- d) The National Programme Board shall establish an RPL Committee with subject matter expertise, drawn from the National Programme Board and supported by such external RPL assessing expertise that it determines is required to carry out this function.
- e) The RPL committee, supported by the Co-ordinating ETB, shall establish a communications and support services plan to help apprentices in the preparation of their applications, particularly in relation to the development of a portfolio of evidence.
- f) The RPL committee shall establish a panel from which two representatives will be nominated to assess applications received.
- g) Outcomes from the RPL assessment process are subject to ratification by the New Apprenticeship National Examinations Board. This is appropriate as a positive recommendation on RPL leads to the grant of credit or exemptions.
- h) Apprentices have the right to appeal the outcome of their RPL application in accordance with the provisions below.
 - a. References
 - b. CV
 - c. Job descriptions and experiences
 - d. Personal statements
 - e. Details of any training completed
 - f. Certificates for qualifications, training programmes, etc.
 - g. Sample work (e.g., drawings, minutes from meetings, business plan, etc.)
 - h. Evidence from the apprentice's personal life
 - i. Published work
 - j. Professional licenses/registrations or membership of professional organisations
 - k. Acknowledged accomplishments

- l. Video/audio recordings
- m. Relevant recreational activities or hobbies

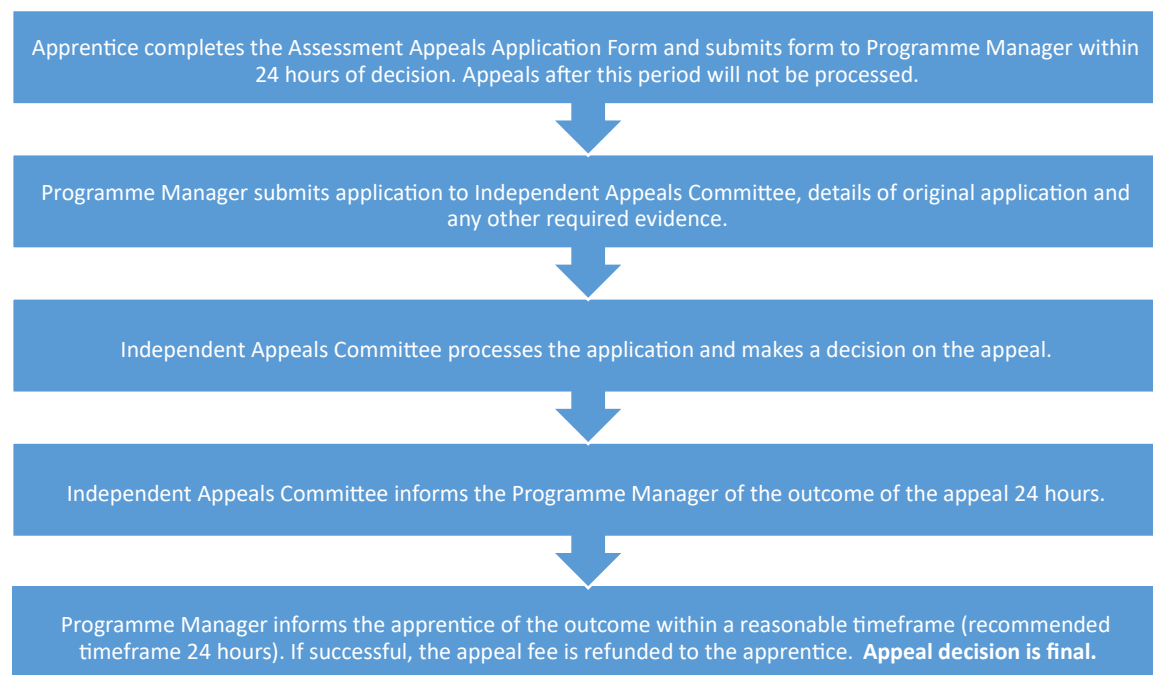
The apprentice may be required to provide verification from previous or current employers that the learning stated has been achieved by the apprentice.

The RPL committee appoints two RPL assessors to consider the Portfolio of Evidence. The assessors should examine the submitted portfolio and agree a decision within a reasonable timeframe of ten (10) working days. The portfolio is assessed, and an agreed grade is assigned by the assessors.

RPL Appeals

The apprentice has the right to appeal the decision in relation to RPL (can appeal decision on application or grade awarded). Appeals must be made within five (5) days of the decision. In exceptional circumstances, the AEO Manager/ Programme Manager may extend this time limit. All appeals must be made in writing using the Appeals Application Form (see Appendix 3).

Where possible, the apprentice discusses the appeal application with the Learning Practitioner and/or Programme Manager.



Recognition of Prior CERTIFIED Learning Application Form

Please complete all sections of the application form

Part A	
Centre Name:	
Apprentice Name:	

Apprentice Address:	
Apprentice Contact Number:	
Apprentice Email Address:	
Programme Code/Title:	
Award Code/Title:	
Date of Application:	

Part B	
Recognition for Prior CERTIFIED Learning (RPCL) If yes, please indicate which RPCL you are applying for:	Yes/No
a) Recognition of FETAC award towards a QQI award	Yes/No
b) Recognition other awarding bodies (HEIs, City and Guilds, etc.) towards a QQI award	Yes/No
c) Recognition of QQI certificate towards award of other awarding bodies	Please see specific awarding body Procedures

Part C		
Details of application:		
Supporting evidence: (Please list all supporting evidence included in this application)		
Exemptions (based on RPCL) in respect of:		
Module Code	Module Title	Module Level

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Part D			
Apprentice Signature		Date	
Programme Manager Name			
Programme Manager Signature		Date	

Recognition of Prior EXPERIENTIAL Learning Application Form

Please complete all sections of the application form

Part A	
Centre Name:	
Apprentice Name:	
Apprentice Address:	
Apprentice Contact Number:	
Apprentice Email Address:	
Programme Code/Title:	
Award Code/Title:	
Date of Application:	

Part B	
Details of Application	

Part C			
Apprentice Signature		Date	
Programme Manager Name			
Programme Manager Signature		Date	

Apprentice Appeals Application Form

Part A: To be completed by the apprentice and returned to the Programme Coordinator by a specified deadline	
Centre Name:	

Apprentice Name:		
Apprentice Address:		
PPSN No (if required)		
Programme Code/Title:		
Are there impending deadlines which may need to be considered with this application: CAO Applicant/Other Applicant:		Yes/No
If yes, please give details:		

Please circle appropriate appeal:

Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment outcome	Yes/No
Assessment Deadlines (short-term extension) outcome	Yes/No
Assessment Deadlines (compassionate consideration in extenuating circumstances) outcome	Yes/No
Apprentice Assessment Malpractice outcome	Yes/No
Recognition of Prior Learning outcome	Yes/No
Other (please give details):	Yes/No
Details of appeal application (please provide full details of reasons for appeal):	

Apprentice Signature		Date	
Programme Manager Name			
Programme Manager Signature		Date	

Part B: To be completed by the Independent Appeals Committee

Independent Appeals Committee Members:		
Details of evidence received:		
Date received:		
Outcome of decision:	Successful/Unsuccessful	
Date:		
Decision Details:		
Independent Appeals Committee Signatures and Date:	Signature	Date

This policy will be reviewed by LMETB at the end of the first year of running the RAA pilot programme.