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**Self-assessment template for recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning**

This template was developed to function as an instrument to self-assess an institution’s own RPL practice. It can also serve as a basis for focused discussion about RPL within the institution.

The template has been developed to work for the whole Higher Education sector and is thus quite general. The questions in the template’s first part and on the four phases of validation will make the most sense if they are considered in the national or institutional context. The template can therefore serve as a basis for discussion in the institution focusing on the question “what does this mean in our context”.

This self-assessment template has been developed within the project “RPL in practice” and is based on the *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning* developed by Cedefop <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3073>. It contains statements on crucial points for successful implementation and some links to examples. The statements are project specific. It’s a non-exclusive list of prerequisites that may serve as examples. Each institution should define its own list.

**Definitions of validation and the four phases of validation used in the RPL in practice project**

Validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

1. IDENTIFICATION through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual; A model to identify knowledge, skills and competences of a potential candidate for RPL.

2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual's experiences; The provision of evidence of the knowledge, skills and competences.

3. a formal ASSESSMENT of these experiences; The phase in which the documented evidence of the individual’s knowledge, skills and competences are compared against specific standards/Learning outcomes.

4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification; The official recording confirming the achievement of learning outcomes against a specified standard.

**Part 1: Necessary conditions for RPL at the institution** – to be filled in before working with an RPL case.

| **Necessary conditions for RPL** | **Existing?**  **Yes, No or Partially** | **Short explanation of how the condition is met** | **Crucial points for successful implementation** | **Challenges** | **Links to examples** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Commitment of the Institution to work with RPL, which manifests itself in a strategy and an action plan. |  |  | * Commitment at all relevant parts and levels of the institution, academic as well as administrative. | Attitudes: Resistance and discomfort in relation to the value of learning which has not been attained through traditional pathways. | CIT: “Marks & Standards”  and  “Policy Governing Recognition of Prior Learning”  <https://www.cit.ie/aboutcit/reports_plansandpolicies/academic>  University of Gothenburg & network partners:  <https://medarbetarportalen.gu.se/digitalAssets/1733/1733617_st--dmanual-vnv-190522.pdf>  (in Swedish)  KTH:  <https://intra.kth.se/utbildning/utbi/genomfora-utbildning/validera-kompetens> |
| Coordination of involvement of relevant actors at different levels and with different functions within the institution. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coordination of relevant external actors and stakeholders. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Validation arrangements linked to national qualifications frameworks and systems. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Reference to learning-outcomes-based standards equivalent to those used for formal education and training. |  |  | * Easily accessible course catalogue. |  | <https://courses.cit.ie/> |
| Robust quality assurance mechanisms for RPL in place. |  |  | * Clear, transparent process. |  |  |
| Provision of qualified professionals. Support and professional development |  |  | * Continuous staff development. |  | <https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/module/moduleId/12559> |
| * Mentors (counsellors) |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Assessors |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Others |  |  |  |  |  |
| Routines to reach out to/identify potential candidates exist. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Impartial and comprehensive information, guidance and mentoring (counselling) throughout the process.  **Checklist: Does the information to candidates include the following?** |  |  | * Easily accessible information adopted to target group. | * Reach out to potential candidates. | <https://www.cit.ie/rpl> |
| * existing alternative validation forms available (formative as well as summative) |  |  |  |  |  |
| * timelines for validation |  |  |  |  |  |
| * costs |  |  |  |  |  |
| * procedure |  |  |  |  |  |
| * forms of evidence of learning outcomes |  |  |  |  |  |
| * presentation of evidence |  |  |  |  |  |
| * requirements for evidence |  |  |  |  |  |
| * standards to be applied |  |  |  |  |  |
| * assessment and how best to approach the process |  |  |  |  |  |
| * support available |  |  |  |  |  |
| * appeal procedures |  |  |  |  |  |
| * possible results and outcomes of the validation process |  |  |  |  |  |

**Part 2. Self-assessment template –** to be filled in parallel to working with an RPL case

| **1. Identification** | **Short description** | **Crucial points for successful implementation** | **Challenges** | **Links to examples** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Has the purpose of the validation and the different phases of the process been clearly defined and communicated to the candidate? |  | * Clear information and support to candidates. * Clear role definitions and responsibilities. * Clear definitions of how validation can be used. * Clear information about the process and what kind of information the candidate has to present. * Guidance/mentoring to candidates. | * The candidates’ understanding of their responsibility and the effort they must put into the process – including the reflection on their learning. | <https://www.cit.ie/rpl>  <https://www.cit.ie/rpl/bookaworkshop>  <https://www.kth.se/en/studies/master/recognition-of-prior-learning-1.786469> |
| Which tools and procedures support identification? |  | * Guidelines * Easy access to information on Learning Outcomes on programme and course level linked to a qualification framework. * Templates and forms. * Examples | * Poorly constructed Learning Outcomes. * Know when all the relevant evidence is identified. | <https://www.cit.ie/courses/findacourse>  <https://www.cit.ie/rpl/usefulforms>  <http://courses.cit.ie>  <https://www.algebra.hr/visoko-uciliste/en/studij/>  <https://www.studera.nu/startpage/road-to-studies/admission-to-university-studies/prior-learning-and-exemptions/>  <https://www.kth.se/utbildning>  <https://intra.kth.se/utbildning/utbi/genomfora-utbildning/validera-kompetens> |
| How is guidance and mentoring (counselling) supporting and integrated into the identification phase? |  | * Have a clear point of contact for mentoring (counselling). * Define the role of mentor/counsellor and the candidate. * Have a format where the candidate is supported in the process of identifying his/her competences. | * Make all staff familiar with the process and possibility as the initial point of contact may not be the validation contact point. |  |
| Are academics involved in the identification phase? If so in which way? |  | * Engaged and well-trained academic staff. * Supporting information and documentation for staff. * Open mind-set. * Clear responsibility. | * Continuous staff development. |  |

| **2. Documentation** | **Short description** | **Crucial points for successful implementation** | **Challenges** | **Links to examples** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Have you thought about what kind of evidence you would expect and accept from a learner to demonstrate knowledge skills and competence in order to be included in the process? |  | * Focus on evidence that reflects the acquired skill/knowledge, not the way it was acquired. * Learning outcomes oriented curricula |  |  |
| What formats of evidence (work samples, demonstrations, extended CVs etc.) are used for documenting non-formal and informal learning? |  | * An agreed, non-exclusive list, of basic formats. * Openness to, and combination of, different types of formats. * Collect documentation with assessment in mind. * Communicate acceptable evidence both within the HEI and with candidates. * Institutional QA requirements that support reference to a diversity of evidence. | * Authenticity of documentation. * Translation if foreign documentation. |  |
| How do existing documentation support the transfer and portability of acquired knowledge, skills and competences? |  | * The ownership of the application should be with the candidate so they should have a copy in order to reuse it or transfer it to another context. | * GDPR compliance? |  |

| **3. Assessment** | **Short description** | **Crucial points for successful implementation** | **Challenges** | **Links to examples** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| How is the assessment method adapted to the documented competences and learning of candidate? |  |  |  |  |
| To what extent have assessment methods been chosen according to their reliability and/or validity? |  | * Focus on the expected Learning Outcomes. * Consider whether the evidence provided is sufficient, current, relevant. * Methods flexible enough in order to enable the candidate to fully demonstrate their learning. * Use methods already implemented. * A precedence database. | * Overassessment due to lack of familiarity or comfort with RPL. |  |
| Which reference point in QF, i.e. standard/learning outcome, is being used? |  | * National Qualifications Framework. * Clearly defined Learning Outcomes. * Applying rubrics in the assessment process. |  |  |
| Have the conditions for assessment been clearly defined and communicated in terms of procedure, methods  and evaluation/assessment standards to the candidate? |  | * Transparent and clearly defined process. * Examples and case-studies help candidates to understand what is required of them. * Easily available and clearly defined Learning Outcomes. | * Make candidates understand the procedures. * Unrealistic expectations will lead to disappointment and extra work for both candidates and assessor. |  |

| **4. Certification** | **Short description** | **Crucial points for successful implementation** | **Challenges** | **Links to examples** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The status of the Certification: How and to what extent can the outcomes of validation  be transferred, i.e. give access to further studies or job opportunities? |  |  | * If the preceding steps of documentation and assessment are not conducted in line with agreed standards and do not lead to the award of academic credit, the outcome of validation (certification, transcript) may not meet the standard academic conventions to facilitate transfer to further studies. * Perception of different actors involved in education and the workplace * Grading or impact of not grading |  |
| Does the certification refer to the same or equivalent standards as those used for formal education and training? |  | * When achieved, LO are equally valued regardless of the way the learning is achieved. * The status of certification no different from other Certificates issued by the Institution. * Well established NQF and well-constructed learning outcomes | * Reach a common understanding that one can reach the same LO regardless of the way it is achieved. * Developing staff confidence and competence * Grading |  |