# Recognition of Prior Learning

## National Framework for Scottish Higher Education

**Toolkit Handbook**

A toolkit to support departments, programme teams and learners in understanding, engaging with, planning for and implementing RPL

QAA Scotland
18 Bothwell Street
Glasgow
G2 6NU
Telephone: +44 (0) 141 572 3420
Fax: +44 (0) 141 572 3421
Email: enhancement@qaa.ac.uk

Sector level

Institutional level

Student level

PSRB level

Viewpoints

# Contents

# 1   Summary

Welcome to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) handbook which is designed to support departments, programme teams and learners in understanding, engaging with, planning for and implementing RPL.

The RPL toolkit is based on the University of Ulster's Viewpoints framework for curriculum enhancement (http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/) and builds on and aligns with the QAA's Flexible Curriculum Toolkit. This handbook is modelled on handbook of the Flexible Curriculum Toolkit as well as on the original Viewpoints handbook.  It provides information to help the following processes:

- Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL.

- Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision.

- Implementing RPL in programmes.

The toolkit is designed to help institutions in implementing the RPL National Framework for Scottish Higher Education. QAA Scotland's work on RPL is part of the sector's broader approach to widening participation in higher education in Scotland. RPL can help to make higher education more accessible to non-traditional learners, encourage different forms of flexible learning paths and engage a more diverse student body.

Chapter 2 (Introduction) provides a brief summary of the Viewpoints approach, its purpose and benefits and how it has been customised to the context of RPL and the flexible curricula.

Chapter 3 (The RPL toolkit) describes who can use the toolkit, the resources available and provides a recommended flow-diagram for using it, including options for customising the toolkit.

Chapter 4 (Running workshops) outlines how workshops should be run and makes recommendations for how they should be facilitated and outputs/outcomes captured.

Chapter 5 (Action planning) briefly describes a recommended process for writing up the workshops and action planning, using the templates provided as part of the toolkit.

Chapter 6 lists the toolkit cards.

# 2    Introduction

## 2.1    The origin and genesis of Viewpoints

Viewpoints was a Jisc-funded curriculum design project at the University of Ulster. It produced a toolkit to aid programme teams in reflecting on, discussing and planning effective curriculum designs based around four themes: (1) Assessment and Feedback; (2) Information Skills; (3) Learner Engagement and (4) Creativity in the Curriculum. Details of the project can be found on the Jisc Design Studio and the University of Ulster Viewpoints wiki.

The Viewpoints approach has subsequently been adopted by a range of institutions and the Jisc Panorama project (part of the Jisc e-Learning Programme) supported a range of pilot projects in different institutions. In addition, the Viewpoints framework has been adapted to other contexts eg

- **Digital Literacies**: the University of Greenwich is working on this as an output from their Digital Literacies in Transition project (part of the Jisc-funded Developing Digital Literacies programme).

- **Student Partnerships**: the (student) Change Agent Network has developed a Viewpoints toolkit to aid institutions in setting up partnerships with students and students as change agent initiatives. It encompasses four dimensions: (1) Partnership set-up; (2) Partnership implementation; (3) Capabilities, development and accreditation and (4) Evaluation, impact and sustainability.

- **Work-based learning**: a Viewpoints for Work-based Learning toolkit is being developed as part of a Jisc-funded project within the Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development programme.  It encompasses four key themes: (1) Establishing an employer-provider partnership; (2) Designing and delivering work-based programmes; (3) Reviewing and quality-assuring work-based learning programmes and (4) Guiding and supporting work-based learners.

- **Flexible Curricula**: The QAA in Scotland supported and funded the development of the Flexible Curriculum Toolkit as part of its Flexible Curricula Enhancement Theme programme which builds on the concept of the Flexible Continuum explored in the outcomes paper from the Flexible Delivery Enhancement Theme, 'A practical guide to providing flexible learning in further and higher education' by John Casey and Pam Wilson.

An evaluation of the Viewpoints project was conducted by Prof David Nicol and written up in a report "Transformational Change in Teaching and Learning Recasting the Educational Discourse" (2012). A key quote by David Nicol: "*Workshops succeeded, impressively, in creating change locally but, importantly, in seeding change beyond the immediate participation experience*".

## 2.2    The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Toolkit

The QAA in Scotland has supported and funded the development of the RPL toolkit as part of its National Framework for the Recognition of Prior Learning. The toolkit development follows on and aligns with the Flexible Curriculum Toolkit.

The principle component of the RPL toolkit is a set of **discussion** cards which are designed to help promote and focus discussions in workshops, around three key processes.

- Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL

- Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision

- Implementing RPL in programmes

These will not necessarily run sequentially but may run concurrently or individually, depending on the needs and requirements of the users.

Note (1): "department" in this context is meant to be used as a generic term that signifies a "local" part of an organisational structure such as a faculty, school, institute or department. This recognises that RPL implementation in different institutions may be implemented - in practice - at different levels of the structure, depending upon size and function.

Examples of the cards are given below:

*Front:*

**A1-1**

Good practice in
developing understanding about and engagement with RPL
should:

Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised

- Do staff understand what informal and non-formal learning are and how they can be assessed and validated?
- Do staff have believe that informal and non-formal learning is inferior to formal learning and accreditation?
- Do staff appreciate the benefits of formal and informal learning for learners, employers and institutions?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

*Rear:*

**Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised**

- Provide information and outline guidance on recognition of informal and non-formal learning for academic, professional support services and administrative staff.
- Use the guidance materials provided as part of this toolkit together with institutional materials and adapt them to the department's needs and contexts.
- Provide guidance in a variety of media e.g.
  - Talking head video interviews with stakeholders such as learners, staff and employers.
  - Screencasts e.g. videos showing audio narration of PowerPoint presentations.
  - Mind-maps.
  - Web-sites.
  - Podcasts.
  - Q-cards.
  - Posters.
  - QR codes (to link print with online media).
  - E-books.
  - Media targeted at use by mobile devices.
- Provide information and outline guidance for other stakeholders relevant to the Department e.g. learners, employers and PSRBs
- Ensure that information and guidance emphasises:
  - Key RPL principles (Learner focused; Accessible; Flexible; Reliable, transparent and consistent; Quality assured)
  - Importance of and benefits from RPL - for learners, universities, employers and PSRBs.
  - Advertising and marketing materials should integrate accurate information and identify named sources for information/guidance
  - Department policy and guidance material for RPL should align with overarching HEI policy and guidance
  - Awareness of widening access agreements is required
  - Awareness of changing policy on overseas students, TIER4 arrangements, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is required.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning
Based on the Viewpoints model: http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home

**B1-1**

Good practice in
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision
should:

Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance

- To what extent are applicants provided with clear, accurate and accessible advice and guidance?

- Do applicants have clear points of contact for advice and guidance?

- Do applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process?

**QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance**

- Applicants are provided with a full understanding of each of the three stages of the RPL process:
  - Advice and guidance
  - Support
  - Recognition / assessment
- The applicant is provided with key points of contact for reliable and frequent advice and guidance.
- Preliminary information and guidance on RPL and RPiL is be provided, including:
  - RPL principles
  - Policy
  - Costs
- The advice and guidance ensures that applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process.
- The advice and guidance addresses likely questions from applicants:
  - What is RPL?
  - Why are there two different types?
  - What is involved?
  - How do I make a claim for RPL or RPiL?
  - Who do I talk to for advice/who will support me through the process?
  - Is there any cost involved?
  - How much credit can I gain?
  - How long will it take?
- Advice and guidance is reinforced in written or electronic form as well as through discussion and is clear, accurate and accessible.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning
Based on the Viewpoints model: http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home

In addition to the RPL discussion cards, the toolkit also includes:

- This handbook which provides guidance on how to use the toolkit, including suggestions for facilitating workshops.
- Action planning templates for each of the three stages:
    - Departmental vision and communications plan template
    - Departmental RPL implementation plan template
    - Programme RPL action plan template
- An A0 worksheet template for use in workshops.

The development and piloting of the toolkit has been managed by a team involving Heather Gibson (QAA Scotland), Ruth Whittaker (Glasgow Caledonian University) and Peter Chatterton (Project Consultant).

## 2.3   Purpose of adopting the Viewpoints approach

It is the experience of those who have used the Viewpoints approach that it can be used for a variety of purposes. It is anticipated that the RPL toolkit will be used in scenarios such as the following:

- Developing better understanding about and engagement with RPL including engendering e.g.
    - Appreciation of the academic value of informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised.
    - Appreciation of how RPL can support changing needs and drivers of the department, employers and learners.
    - Consensus on a departmental vision for RPL including measures of success.
    - Appreciation of the barriers and enablers for implementing RPL within the department.
    - Appreciation of how to communicate with and engage stakeholders with RPL.

- Developing departmental policies and procedures for RPL and developing consensus on:
    - RPL processes
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - QA/QE processes
    - Staff development and support
    - Guidelines for programme teams
    - Assessment framework
    - Partnerships
    - Use of technology to support RPL

- o Business approaches to RPL

- o Range and scope of programmes for RPL

- Implementing RPL in programmes, including identification of :

    - o Needs, demands, drivers and priorities for RPL

    - o Guiding principles for RPL in the programme

    - o Assignment of staff to RPL roles

    - o Integrating RPL into curricula

    - o Using RPL to shape flexible provision

    - o Assessment framework

    - o Use of technology tools and good practices

    - o Learner preparation and support

- Planning or reviewing a type of provision e.g. distance/open/blended/work-based learning, MOOCs, undergraduate or postgraduate provision.

- Developing policies/plans relating to student experience and teaching, learning and assessment strategy.

- Developing staff CPD programmes.

- Designing and implementing partnerships with students for eg students as change agents, students as researchers.
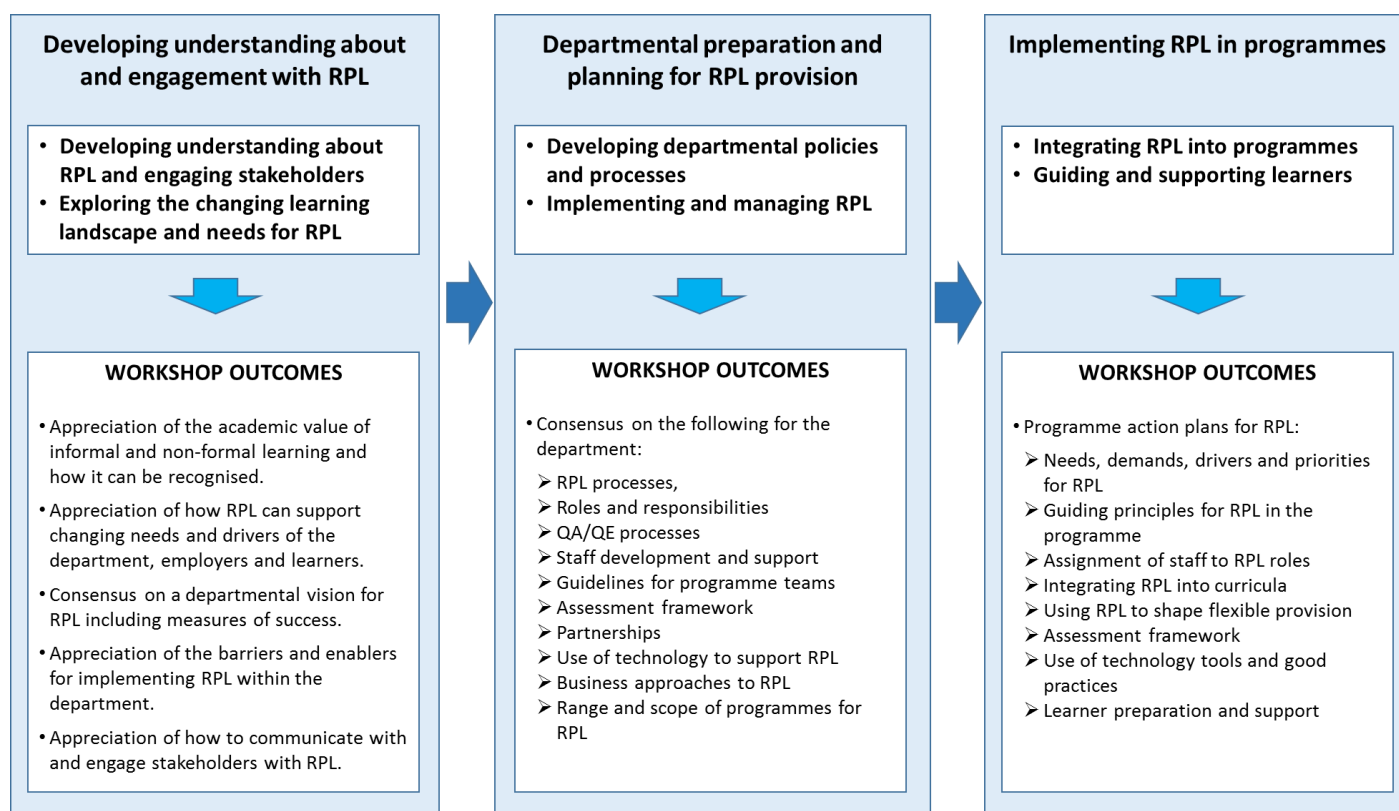
## 2.4   The toolkit process

The toolkit process is essentially three key stages:

- Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL

- Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision

- Implementing RPL in programmes

These will not necessarily run sequentially but may run concurrently or individually, depending on the needs and requirements of the users.

The three key processes are summarised in the diagram below, highlighting the outcome of each of the processes:

| Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL | Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision | Implementing RPL in programmes |
|---|---|---|
| • Developing understanding about RPL and engaging stakeholders<br>• Exploring the changing learning landscape and needs for RPL | • Developing departmental policies and processes<br>• Implementing and managing RPL | • Integrating RPL into programmes<br>• Guiding and supporting learners |
| **WORKSHOP OUTCOMES**<br><br>• Appreciation of the academic value of informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised.<br>• Appreciation of how RPL can support changing needs and drivers of the department, employers and learners.<br>• Consensus on a departmental vision for RPL including measures of success.<br>• Appreciation of the barriers and enablers for implementing RPL within the department.<br>• Appreciation of how to communicate with and engage stakeholders with RPL. | **WORKSHOP OUTCOMES**<br><br>• Consensus on the following for the department:<br> ➢ RPL processes,<br> ➢ Roles and responsibilities<br> ➢ QA/QE processes<br> ➢ Staff development and support<br> ➢ Guidelines for programme teams<br> ➢ Assessment framework<br> ➢ Partnerships<br> ➢ Use of technology to support RPL<br> ➢ Business approaches to RPL<br> ➢ Range and scope of programmes for RPL | **WORKSHOP OUTCOMES**<br><br>• Programme action plans for RPL:<br> ➢ Needs, demands, drivers and priorities for RPL<br> ➢ Guiding principles for RPL in the programme<br> ➢ Assignment of staff to RPL roles<br> ➢ Integrating RPL into curricula<br> ➢ Using RPL to shape flexible provision<br> ➢ Assessment framework<br> ➢ Use of technology tools and good practices<br> ➢ Learner preparation and support |

It is intended that each of these three stages produces an output as follows:

- Departmental vision and communications plan

- Departmental RPL implementation plan

- Programme RPL action plan

The following photos show participants using the Flexible Curriculum toolkit:
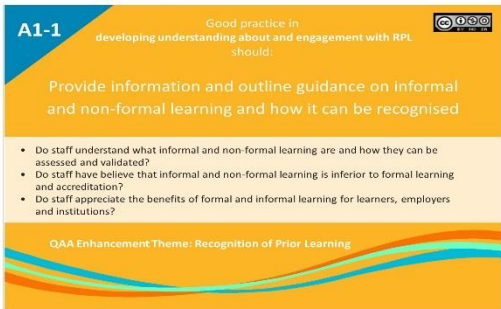
The toolkit includes an A0 worksheet template:



The following diagrams illustrate how the RPL toolkit discussion cards can be used with the worksheets:
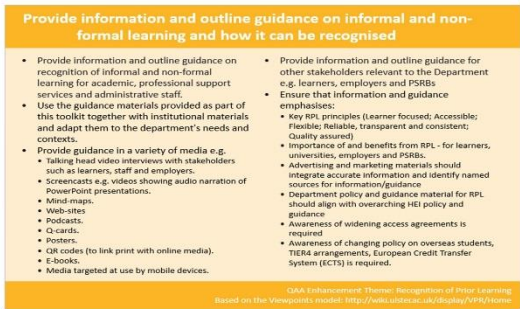
## 1. Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL



### Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL

**Front**   **Back**

**A1-1** Good practice in developing understanding about and engagement with RPL should:

Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised

- Do staff understand what informal and non-formal learning are and how they can be assessed and validated?
- Do staff have believe that informal and non-formal learning is inferior to formal learning and accreditation?
- Do staff appreciate the benefits of formal and informal learning for learners, employers and institutions?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

**Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised**

- Provide information and outline guidance on recognition of informal and non-formal learning for academic, professional support services and administrative staff.
- Use the guidance materials provided as part of this toolkit together with institutional materials and adapt them to the department's needs and contexts.
- Provide guidance in a variety of media e.g.
  - Talking head video interviews with stakeholders such as learners, staff and employers.
  - Screencasts e.g. videos showing audio narration of PowerPoint presentations.
  - Mind-maps.
  - Web-sites.
  - Podcasts.
  - Q-cards.
  - Posters.
  - QR codes (to link print with online media).
  - E-books.
  - Media targeted at use by mobile devices.
- Provide information and outline guidance for other stakeholders relevant to the Department e.g. learners, employers and PSRBs
- Ensure that information and guidance emphasises:
  - Key RPL principles (Learner focused; Accessible; Flexible; Reliable, transparent and consistent; Quality assured)
  - Importance of and benefits from RPL - for learners, universities, employers and PSRBs.
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QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning
Based on the Viewpoints model: http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home

### A0 worksheet

① Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL ✓
② Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision
③ Implementing RPL in programmes

Overall objectives

| Priority | Place cards here |
| --- | --- |
| ① ✓ ② ③ | |
| Commentary | |

| Priority | Place cards here |
| --- | --- |
| ① ② ✓ ③ | |
| Commentary | |

| Priority | Place cards here |
| --- | --- |
| ① ② ③ | |
| Commentary | |

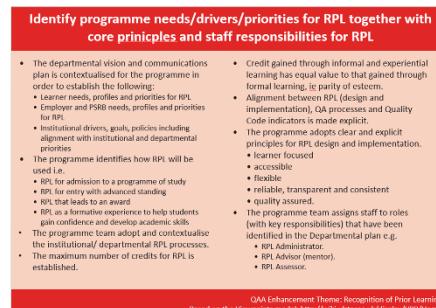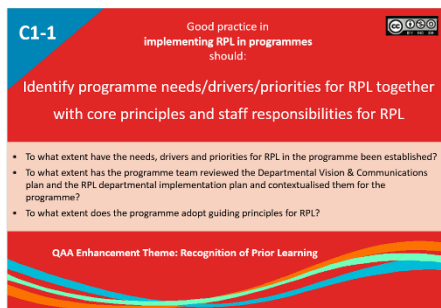| Priority | Place cards here |
| --- | --- |
| ① ② ③ | |
| Commentary | |

1. Tick which stage you are undertaking.

2. Write your overall objectives for this activity on the A0 worksheet *e.g. to review and enhance flexible curriculum provision on a specific programme.*

3. As a group, choose which cards you want to focus on and place them front-up on the A0 worksheet - and categorise them into different priorities.

4. Turn the cards over to show possible different options to consider.

5. On each card, tick those options that are important to discuss (you could also prioritise these individual options).

6. As a group, discuss all the ticked options and write commentary to clarify why these are important.

7. Capture the final worksheet using e.g. a digital camera.

## 2. Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision

### Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision

Front      Back

**B1-1**

Good practice in
departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision
should:

Establish the key components of the RPL
process – stage 1: advice and guidance

- To what extent are applicants provided with clear, accurate and accessible advice and guidance?
- Do applicants have clear points of contact for advice and guidance?
- Do applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

**Establish the key components of the RPL
process – stage 1: advice and guidance**

- Applicants are provided with a full understanding of each of the three stages of the RPL process:
  - Advice and guidance
  - Support
  - Recognition / assessment
- The applicant is provided with key points of contact for reliable and frequent advice and guidance.
- Preliminary information and guidance on RPL and RPiL is be provided, including:
  - RPL principles
  - Policy
  - Costs
- The advice and guidance ensures that applicants have realistic expectations regarding the possible outcomes of RPL/RPiL before commencing the process.

- The advice and guidance addresses likely questions from applicants:
  - What is RPL?
  - Why are there two different types?
  - What is involved?
  - How do I make a claim for RPL or RPiL?
  - Who do I talk to for advice/who will support me through the process?
  - Is there any cost involved?
  - How much credit can I gain?
  - How long will it take?
- Advice and guidance is reinforced in written or electronic form as well as through discussion and is clear, accurate and accessible.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning
Based on the Viewpoints model: http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VPR/Home

### A0 worksheet

① Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL
② Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision ✓
③ Implementing RPL in programmes

Overall objectives

Priority — Place cards here

① ✓
②
③

Commentary

Priority — Place cards here

①
② ✓
③

Commentary

Priority — Place cards here

①
②
③

Commentary

Priority — Place cards here

①
②
③

Commentary

1. Tick which stage you are undertaking.

2. Write your overall objectives for this activity on the A0 worksheet *e.g. to review and enhance flexible curriculum provision on a specific programme.*

3. As a group, choose which cards you want to focus on and place them front-up on the A0 worksheet - and categorise them into different priorities.

4. Turn the cards over to show possible different options to consider.

5. On each card, tick those options that are important to discuss (you could also prioritise these individual options).

6. As a group, discuss all the ticked options and write commentary to clarify why these are important.

7. Capture the final worksheet using e.g. a digital camera.

## Implementing RPL in programmes

**Front**  **Back**



**C1-1**  Good practice in
implementing RPL in programmes
should:

Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together
with core principles and staff responsibilities for RPL

- To what extent have the needs, drivers and priorities for RPL in the programme been established?
- To what extent has the programme team reviewed the Departmental Vision & Communications plan and the RPL departmental implementation plan and contextualised them for the programme?
- To what extent does the programme adopt guiding principles for RPL?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning

Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together with
core prinicples and staff responsibilities for RPL

- The departmental vision and communications plan is contextualised for the programme in order to establish the following:
  - Learner needs, profiles and priorities for RPL
  - Employer and PSRB needs, profiles and priorities for RPL
  - Institutional drivers, goals, policies including alignment with institutional and departmental priorities
- The programme identifies how RPL will be used i.e.
  - RPL for admission to a programme of study
  - RPL for entry with advanced standing
  - RPL that leads to an award
  - RPL as a formative experience to help students gain confidence and develop academic skills
- The programme team adopt and contextualise the institutional/ departmental RPL processes.
- The maximum number of credits for RPL is established.

- Credit gained through informal and experiential learning has equal value to that gained through formal learning, ie parity of esteem.
- Alignment between RPL (design and implementation), QA processes and Quality Code indicators is made explicit.
- The programme adopts clear and explicit principles for RPL design and implementation.
  - learner focused
  - accessible
  - flexible
  - reliable, transparent and consistent
  - quality assured.
- The programme team assigns staff to roles (with key responsibilities) that have been identified in the Departmental plan e.g.
  - RPL Administrator.
  - RPL Advisor (mentor).
  - RPL Assessor.

QAA Enhancement Theme: Recognition of Prior Learning
Based on the Viewpoints model: http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/display/VP9/Home
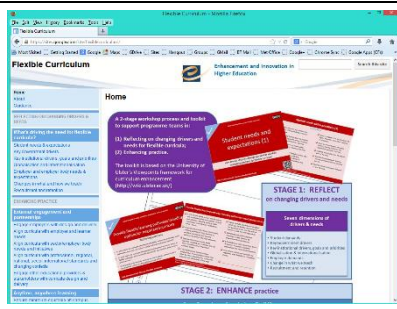
### A0 worksheet

① **Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL**
② **Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision**
③ **Implementing RPL in programmes** ✔

Overall objectives

Priority  Place cards here
① ✔
②
③
Commentary

Priority  Place cards here
①
② ✔
③
Commentary

Priority  Place cards here
①
②
③
Commentary

Priority  Place cards here
①
②
③
Commentary

1. Tick which stage you are undertaking.

2. Write your overall objectives for this activity on the A0 worksheet *e.g. to review and enhance flexible curriculum provision on a specific programme.*

3. As a group, choose which cards you want to focus on and place them front-up on the A0 worksheet - and categorise them into different priorities.

4. Turn the cards over to show possible different options to consider.

5. On each card, tick those options that are important to discuss (you could also prioritise these individual options).

6. As a group, discuss all the ticked options and write commentary to clarify why these are important.

7. Capture the final worksheet using e.g. a digital camera.

## 2.5    Benefits of using Viewpoints

There are a range of likely benefits from adopting a Viewpoints approach:

- The workshops help departments and programme teams to reflect on changing drivers and for recognition of informal and non-formal learning, particularly from the perspectives of potential students and employers.

- The workshops provide a simple approach for departments and programme teams to consider a broad range of aspects to plan, implement and deliver recognition of informal and on-formal learning.

- Resources in the toolkit will help departments to promote better understanding about RPL and engage a broad range of stakeholders with it.

- The workshops support collaborative and creative sharing of ideas, prioritisation and decision-making within a complex design process.

- Outputs from the Viewpoints workshop can be used for evidence for validation/revalidation panels.

- The processes enhance effective teamwork and strengthen team building.

- The Viewpoints approach can be incorporated into strategic policies and plans in relation to quality enhancement including enhancing the student experience and learning, teaching and assessment.

- The toolkit is built around on the RPL national Framework and reflects the good practices within the framework.

- All resources are free, simple to use, reusable and e-versions are provided to allow customisation to local needs and contexts.

# 3    The RPL toolkit
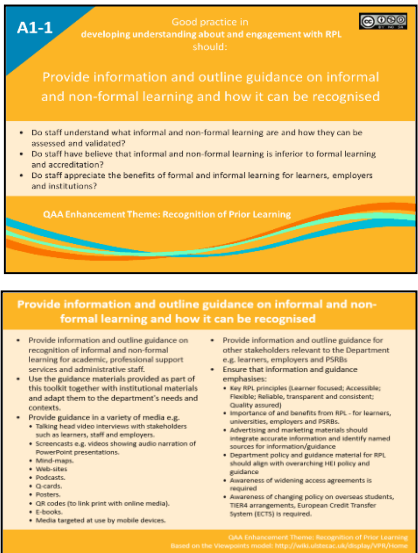
## 3.1    Who can use the toolkit?
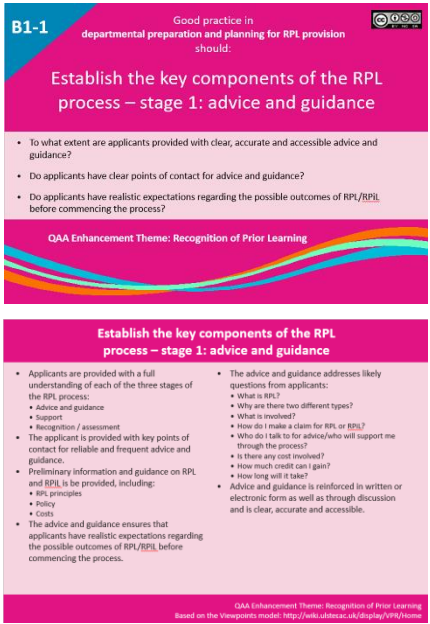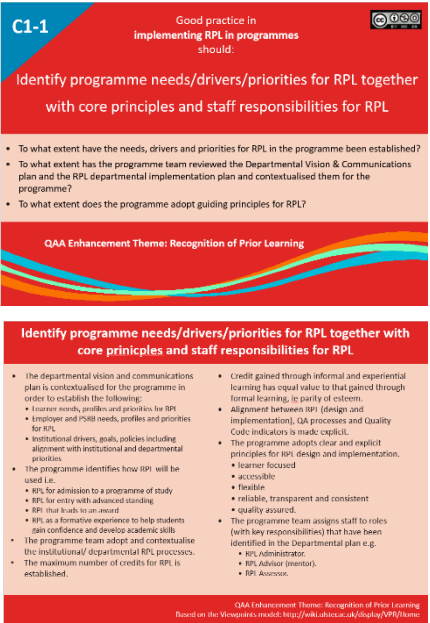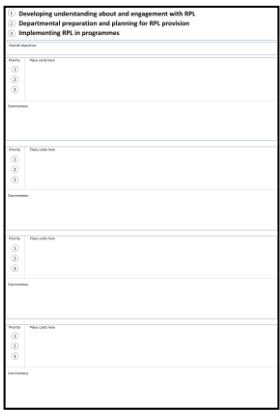
Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about which institutional role types will participate in each of these three processes, the following are suggestions:

| Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL | Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision | Implementing RPL in programmes |
|---|---|---|
| • Senior departmental management including those with responsibility for LT&A, employer engagement, QA.<br>• RPL advisors, assessors, administrators.<br>• Support staff e.g. e-learning, employability.<br>• Admissions and enquiry staff. | • Senior departmental management including those with responsibility for LT&A, employer engagement, QA.<br>• RPL advisors, assessors, administrators.<br>• Support staff e.g. e-learning, employability. | • Programme team members<br>• RPL advisors, assessors<br>• Support staff e.g. e-learning, employability |

## 3.2    Toolkit resources

The Viewpoints toolkit comprises the following resources:

| A set of cards for (1) developing understanding about and engagement with RPL | A set of cards supporting developing understanding about and engagement with RPL<br><br>These are available as editable PowerPoint files. |  |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **A set of cards for (2) departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision** | A set of cards supporting departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision.<br><br>These are available as editable PowerPoint files. |  |
| **A set of cards for (3) implementing RPL in programmes** | A set of cards supporting programme teams in implementing RPL in programmes.<br><br>These are available as editable PowerPoint files. |  |
| **A0 worksheet** | A0 worksheet – on which cards are placed. The same worksheet template can be used for all three stages.<br><br>This is available as an editable PowerPoint file. |  |

| **Action planning templates**<br><br>• Departmental vision and communications plan template<br><br>• Departmental RPL implementation plan template<br><br>• Programme RPL action plan template |  |
|---|---|
| **This handbook** | This handbook contains all the information needed to use the Viewpoints toolkit. |
| **Hand-out** | The hand-out can be used for dissemination to interested stakeholders to provide an overview of the Viewpoints toolkit and workshop process.<br><br>It comprises:<br><br>• An overview<br>• The key practice points<br>• One-page crib-sheet to show the workshop process for reflecting on changing drivers and needs.<br>• One-page crib-sheet to show the workshop process for enhancing practice. |
| **Online resources** | A set of online resources (http://tiny.cc/qaarpl001) to complement the toolkit cards, encompassing:<br><br>• Links to further information, guidance and resources.<br><br>• An e-version of this handbook.<br><br>• All toolkit resources in e-format. |

All the resources can be downloaded from
http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resources/toolkit/recognition-of-prior-learning

## 3.3    Preparing for using the RPL toolkit

The RPL toolkit is quite broad in nature as it supports three separate but inter-linked processes:

- Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL

- Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision

- Implementing RPL in programmes

Each of these processes on their own can potentially consume significant time, therefore it is recommended that a department team be put together to oversee the initiative, to review the resources and develop a plan how to adopt them. This team should comprise a broad cross section of departmental roles, e.g.

- Senior departmental management including those with responsibility for LT&A, employer engagement, QA.

- RPL advisors, assessors, administrators.

- Support staff e.g. e-learning, employability.

- Admissions and enquiry staff.

- Employers, RSPBs and students.

This team should, at a minimum consider undertaking the following in preparation:

- Set a clear aim and objectives for using the RPL toolkit – this should be aligned to explicit needs and changing drivers.

- Review the toolkit and make any customisations that will make it more aligned with departmental contexts.

- Create an outline plan for using it with assigned roles, responsibilities and a time-plan.

- Allocate appropriate resources and staff time allowances.

- Select appropriate facilitators to facilitate workshops.

The toolkit resources need to be prepared e.g.

- Printing the toolkit cards – this can either be via a colour printer or using a B&W printer on colour card (available from e.g. Rymans).

- Printing the A0 worksheets – this can be achieved using in-house services or via online printing services.

- Printing other resources e.g. handbook, handouts, instruction sheets.

### 3.4   Customising the toolkit resources

All the toolkit resources are provided in editable electronic formats (e.g. MS PowerPoint or MS Word) so that they may be customised to suit individual institutional, department and programme team contexts. Potential areas for customisation may include:

- Customising terminology
- Customising by aligning the resources with local activities and initiatives
- Reflecting on the toolkit cards and enhancing them with in-house experience and knowledge.
- Adapting the recommended processes to suit local needs.

All resources are available online.

It is recommended that the toolkit cards are printed in colour and, ideally, they should then be laminated.

As a simple alternative option to printing the A0 sheets, personalised A0 worksheets could be made using flipchart pages.

# 4    Running workshops

## 4.1    Role of the facilitator

The facilitator leads the workshop. They should help the group to discuss their objectives effectively, and help them to plan, using the workshop materials.

As a facilitator you will need to do the following:

- Introduce the session.
- Keep an eye on the time (moving people on to the next task if they are spending too long on one part of the workshop). However, be flexible. You don't want to stop valuable contributions.
- Try to encourage all group members to contribute.
- Keep participants focused.
- Use the "Facilitating workshops" guides (below) to remind you of what you need to do during the workshop.

## 4.2    Facilitating workshops

The following could be a template for facilitating workshops:

**Time required:** Approximately 3 hours

| Activity | Instructions | Time |
|---|---|---|
| **Workshop introduction** | <ul><li>Introduce the toolkit and explain the rationale for adopting it.</li><li>Introduce the toolkit and resources and how they are going to be used.</li></ul> | 10 mins |
| **Session outline** | <ul><li>Introduce the workshop tasks one by one.</li><li>Tell the group what they will be doing at each stage.</li><li>Optional: create an online document (e.g. using Google Docs) of the relevant action template (e.g. departmental RPL implementation plan) and display it on a large screen for all to see – and assign one person to populate this as the workshop progresses (you could also allow several people to populate it).</li></ul> | 5 mins |
| **Task 1 Agree objective** | <ul><li>Review and agree the overall objective.</li><li>Record the objective on the A0 worksheet.</li></ul> | 10 mins |
| **Task 2 Consider the seven key themes** | <ul><li>Distribute the toolkit cards and allow the group to read these.</li></ul> | 60 mins |

| Activity | Instructions | Time |
|---|---|---|
| | • *Tip: You can divide the overall group into sub-groups to address specific cards. Ideally a group/sub-group should include approximately 5-6 participants.*<br>• The group discuss the cards and the relevance to their overall objective and decides whether to use all seven cards or eliminate some, if not appropriate to the overall objective.<br>• The group continues the discussions and are asked to place the selected cards (front-up) on the A0 worksheet and assign an overall priority to each card (they may change this as the workshop progresses).<br>• The cards can then be turned over and the group continues to discuss the items on the rear of the cards.<br>• The group are asked to prioritise (or cross off) each item.<br>• Additional items can also be added by the group. | |
| **Task 3**<br>**Writing a commentary** | • The group are then tasked to write a commentary on the A0 worksheet to elaborate on each card e.g. why the selected items are important and how they will impact the overall objective. Post-it notes can also be used. | 20 mins |
| **Task 4**<br>**Capture the workshop and write up key conclusions** | • Toolkit cards should be attached using blue-tak.<br>• The worksheet should be captured/saved eg using a digital camera, ensuring that all text can be easily read.<br>• The key conclusions should be written up using the workshop template which should be disseminated to all participants in both workshops. | 15 mins |

## 4.3   Tips for preparing for the workshops

- **Preparing resources**
  - Select and fully brief the facilitator.
  - Collate, prepare and print all the workshop materials.
  - Book workshop rooms, ensuring appropriate table lay-out and technology access.
  - Ensure there are sufficient writing implements, post-it notes and blue-tak.

- **Engaging participants**
  - Select participants for the workshops ensuring that the group reflect different institutional interests and students and external stakeholders are included as well as programme team members.
  - Engage with all the participants to ensure they "buy-in" to the process.
  - Suggest to participants that they may benefit from bringing their mobile devices which should ideally include facilities to read QR codes.
  - Share the resources with participants before the workshops eg toolkit cards and/or this handbook.

- **Preparing the workshop room**
  - Book your room (based on the number of attendees) and check out size and layout beforehand.

- o Check that the room table is appropriate for the number of participants and the A0 worksheet.
- o Test any technology that you may want to use.

## 4.4 Audio-visual recordings

If possible, you could photograph the workshop sessions at different stages of the process, and video the final workshop task, when one or two members from the group briefly feedback on their progress. However, this is not essential.

If you are capturing photos or videos of your groups, it's important to make sure that all participants have read, understood and signed an image permission form. Do NOT use images of any staff member who has not consented to use of their image.

## 4.5 Hints and tips

Here are some useful tips that may help facilitators when delivering workshops.

These tips have come from the original Viewpoints workshop team and their own extensive experience of planning and delivering programme design workshops, so they are based on real-world examples.

1. Emphasise the fact that the cards are only prompts. They are there as guides to help in the discussions.

2. Identify the objective beforehand, if possible. This will free up time for detailed discussion and tailored planning.

3. Distribute copies of the cards to groups beforehand, so that they are familiar with the themes and ideas before the workshop - this can help prevent information overload.

4. Let participants know that there are no right/wrong answers, and encourage them to record any of their own ideas not listed.

5. Students can work well within the Viewpoints process as it is so learner-focused – and can provide valuable input and a fresh perspective to group discussions.

6. Timings given for the workshops are only suggestions. They are best used as a guide to keep the workshop on schedule.

7. Make use of written and photographed outputs in your planning. Don't have a good creative discussion and then forget to record anything. Essential information may be lost!

8. If you're recording photos or videos of your session, be sure to get ALL participants to complete the image permission sheet. Go to each participant individually to collect their completed permission sheets, so you can identify which members have not consented to their image being used.

9. Don't schedule workshops for a Friday afternoon – participants will most likely be tired and demotivated!

10. Providing refreshments (such as tea, coffee and scones or sandwiches) will help motivate your participants to complete the intensive workshop process.

# 5    Action planning

Each stage of the toolkit contains a template document to record the ideas and actions from the workshops. The three key template documents are:

- Departmental vision and communications plan
- Departmental RPL implementation plan
- Programme RPL action plan

One option is to assign responsibility to a team member to populate these documents within the workshops – another option is to write these up afterwards as a result of the workshops.

The RPL toolkit web-site ([http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resources/toolkit/recognition-of-prior-learning](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resources/toolkit/recognition-of-prior-learning)) provides further resources eg

- Links to RPL resources provided by the QAA, HEA, Jisc, HEFCE and HEFCW.
- Case studies relating to RPL.

## 6   List of Viewpoints cards

The following is a list of the Viewpoints cards:

| A<br>Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL | B<br>Departmental preparation and planning for RPL provision | C<br>Implementing RPL in programmes |
|---|---|---|
| A<br>Developing understanding about and engagement with RPL | B1<br>Developing departmental policies and processes | C1<br>Integrating RPL into programmes |
| • A1-1 Provide information and outline guidance on informal and non-formal learning and how it can be recognised<br>• A1-2 Identify barriers and enablers to implementing RPL<br>• A1-3 Develop a coherent vision and communications & engagement plan for RPL | • B1-1 Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 1: advice and guidance<br>• B1-2 Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 2: support<br>• B1-3 Establish the key components of the RPL process – stage 3: recognition / assessment<br>• B1-4 Establish clear roles and responsibilities for RPL<br>• B1-5 Develop processes for monitoring, review, research, quality-assuring and enhancing RPL | • C1-1 Identify programme needs/drivers/priorities for RPL together with core principles and staff responsibilities for RPL<br>• C1-2 Review how RPL can integrate into curricula at design/review stage<br>• C1-3 Use RPL to shape curriculum design for more flexible provision<br>• C1-4 Design simple RPL assessment frameworks<br>• C1-5 Consider alternative assessment methods<br>• C1-6 Adopt technology tools and good practices in their use to support RPL processes<br>• C1-7 Develop a programme action plan for RPL |
| A2<br>Exploring the changing learning landscape and needs for RPL | B2<br>Implementing and managing RPL | C2<br>Guiding and supporting learners |
| • A2-1 Identify learner needs and profiles for RPL<br>• A2-2 Identify employer and PSRB needs and profiles for RPL<br>• A2-3 Identify institutional drivers, goals, policies and priorities that will influence departmental RPL policy | • B2-1 Guide, develop and support staff<br>• B2-2 Adopt flexible, transparent and business-like approaches to RPL provision<br>• B2-3 Develop partnership working<br>• B2-4 Specify principles for adoption and good practices in use of technology tools to support RPL processes<br>• B2-5 Develop a departmental implementation plan for RPL | • C2-1 Provide information and guidance for learners<br>• C2-2 Provide appropriate support for learners |