



FETAC
*Further Education and
Training Awards Council*
Comhairle na nDámhochtainí
Breisoideachais agus Oiliúna

FETAC information note and background on Recognition of Prior Learning

Prepared for Study Team

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Recognition of prior learning refers to the process of recognition of the knowledge, skills and competence an individual learner already has howsoever acquired. RPL as it is generally known is a tool to formally measure and give value to the non-formal and informal learning a person already has regardless of how it has been acquired.

Recognition of Prior Learning is a relatively recent development in education and training and is recognised as essential for inclusion and the promotion of life long learning.

There is a growing demand for recognition of prior learning from individuals and learners who wish to have their prior learning assessed for the purposes of receiving an award and for access and exemptions from programme requirements. Recognition of prior learning has also been identified as a mechanism to recognise knowledge, skill and competence of persons for the purposes of meeting new legislative and regulatory requirements.

Following consultation the FETAC policy on Recognition of Prior Learning was agreed by Council in 2005. Draft guidelines on recognition of prior learning were prepared by FETAC to support providers. A pilot project commenced in late 2005 with a group of providers with the objective of implementing RPL in accordance with the FETAC policy and guidelines. The purpose of the pilot project was to identify and assess implementation issues relating to providers and FETAC for the recognition of prior learning. 50 learners achieved major and minor awards as a result of the pilot project.

On conclusion of the pilot an evaluation identified the main issues for FETAC and for providers in respect of RPL and made recommendations for future implementation in particular for providers and funders. This report is available on the FETAC website. Key recommendations in the report were to build provider capacity through the establishment of provider quality assurance RPL procedures for access, exemptions and through agreement of an additional sub strand of RPL for those providers with a capacity to facilitate RPL for achievement of awards.

In 2008 FETAC introduced a process to facilitate registered providers who wish to offer FETAC awards to learners on the basis of recognition of prior learning. Interested providers prepare and submit for approval their RPL policy and procedures as a sub strand of their quality assurance systems. This process is supported by a briefing session for interested providers.

Following evaluation providers are approved by FETAC to offer specified named awards to learners through RPL.

To date six providers have had their RPL policies and procedures approved. These are:

Citizens Information Board, Dublin 4
Community Education and Training Centre, Wexford
Empower Learning Ltd., Co Kilkenny
Failte Ireland Training Centres
IBEC Retail Skillnet, Co Donegal
Teagasc

Further information on RPL is available from the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland at www.nqai.ie and from FETAC at www.fetac.ie or rpl@fetac.ie