

Claiming credit

Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

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Section 1: Introduction

Who is the guidance for?

This guidance is designed for sector skills councils, awarding organisations, providers and employers that would like to recognise prior learning through the award of credit within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The guidance provides a set of principles to help sector skills councils, awarding organisations and providers to develop or review their own policies and guidelines for recognition of prior learning (RPL)¹. This guidance is the outcome of work with our stakeholders. It also takes account of international and UK developments in RPL.

Why have we developed the guidance?

The new QCF creates an opportunity to remind stakeholders that non-formal or informal learning can count in the same way as that which has been achieved via a formal route. Not all individuals will try to claim credit for their achievements, but it is important that the opportunity is there for those who want it. Many awarding organisations have well established procedures in place to assess and validate prior learning, particularly in the context of competence-based qualifications. This guidance aims to promote a system-wide provision of RPL, allowing individuals to claim credit for achievements that have not previously been certificated.

The QCF offers technical features that can enable a much wider application of RPL. The units of assessment create a common language of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that do not link to specific learning pathways. The unit-based approach to the award of credit allows for the wider recognition of a set of achievements, as individuals will not have to demonstrate that they have completed a full qualification to earn credit.

¹ The process of documenting, assessing, validating and certificating learning gained outside the formal education and training system is known by many names. These different names are intended to signal different emphasis in the processes. However, they can be confusing, and it was decided by the steering group for this guidance document that the term recognition of prior learning (RPL) would be used throughout.

From the perspective of an awarding organisation there is no fundamental difference between RPL and the assessment of learning achievements through a formal route. The candidate being assessed for credits through RPL must still comply with all the requirements as stated in unit standards and qualifications. The only real difference lies in the route taken to achieve the learning, skills or competences.²

RPL is an alternative route to recognition and not a shortcut. RPL must therefore be an integrated part of a quality-assured assessment process. Assessors in awarding organisations that offer competence-based qualifications routinely conduct assessment of prior learning. However, sector bodies, awarding organisations, learning providers, employers and learners can use the introduction of the QCF to assure that opportunities for RPL are fully used.

Across the world more people are seeing the importance of recognising alternative routes to achieving a qualification.³ However this gives rise to a need for criteria, policies, procedures and principles to understand how to identify and assess prior learning or learning from experience in a consistently reliable, valid, quality-assured way. While there is a need for an agreed national approach to RPL that protects the integrity of qualifications and the award of credit, it is also important that the approach allows for institutional autonomy and for practice to vary according to the context.

RPL in the QCF – aim of the guidance

The guidance aims to contribute to simplifying RPL processes, building mutual trust among practitioners and underwriting the reliability and validity of credit achievements made through RPL. The guidance gives information on how RPL can be used within the context of the QCF.

² For an illustration of the different routes, please refer to the flow diagram on page 12.

³ *The European Inventory for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning* shows that the numbers of people whose learning is accredited is increasing. Twenty-three Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries are working together on recognition of non-formal and informal learning; 32 European countries are working together on recognition of learning outcomes; and the EU has adopted the European Qualifications Framework, specifically mentioning the importance of enabling recognition of non-formal learning.

As well as being flexible to adapt to new ways of recognising learning, the QCF should enable learners to avoid duplication of learning and assessment. Within the QCF there are three ways to achieve this.

- For achievements in the QCF it will be possible to transfer credits.
- For individuals with certificated achievements outside the QCF it will be possible to claim exemption to achieve credits for designated units.
- For individuals with learning or achievements that have not been certificated, it will be possible to assess and validate these through an RPL process.

This guidance focuses on the third option and applies to individuals who wish to claim credit within the QCF for uncertificated prior learning or experience. The guidance provides advice to sector skills councils, awarding organisations and providers on the development of policy and procedure on RPL within the context of the QCF to ensure:

- the provision of opportunities for people to have their non-formal and informal learning validated through non-traditional routes, enhancing lifelong learning and increasing their motivation and contribution to UK and European objectives
- consistency in RPL procedures and processes between and within sectors, institutions and organisations through sharing and helping to ensure good practice
- use of a set of guiding principles on which to base RPL policy and practice
- that RPL is an integral part of robust assessment and moderation procedures
- a sustainable system for quality assurance of RPL.

This guidance includes a number of general principles on RPL in the QCF, aiming to widen access and create additional opportunities for the recognition of an individual's achievements. The guidance can therefore serve as a high-level checklist for sector skills councils, awarding organisations and providers that are developing or reviewing their own RPL guidelines in the context of the QCF.

We also hope the guidance will help to develop assessment practices for teaching and learning by opening up a wider sphere of practice and use of methods that are more responsive to the needs of learners.

While the QCF offers the technical features that can support more RPL, individuals depend on the support and resources provided by stakeholders to put these into practice.

Definition and scope of RPL in the context of the QCF

The QCF defines RPL as follows:

A method of assessment [leading to the award of credit] that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework
(Ofqual/08/3726)

Learners must accompany any evidence of experience with reliable and valid evidence of the learning that they achieved.

In the context of the QCF, the definition of RPL is quite specific and relates to summative assessment and recognition rather than formative assessment. It concerns the process of recognising the achievements of an individual by comparing knowledge, skills and competencies to the requirement of a standard (a QCF unit of assessment). This can be done in either of the following ways:

- standardised assessment methods that apply to a cohort of learners, where candidates who did not participate in a formal programme of learning participate in the assessment
- an individually tailored process of providing evidence adapted to the needs of a candidate.

Candidates will be awarded credit when they have successfully demonstrated that they meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a QCF unit.

An individual must make any claim for RPL against a whole unit or whole units within a qualification. The awarding organisation cannot award credit via RPL for the partial completion of a unit. The credits awarded are identical regardless of the route taken to achieve them. Indeed, the individual should be able to achieve all units in the QCF through RPL and may achieve a whole qualification solely through RPL.

In exceptional and justified instances, the awarding organisation may place limits on units and qualifications that learners can complete via RPL. The organisation should specifically indicate these limits in the rules of combination and the guidance for developing assessment arrangements for the unit. Such exceptions could include:

- existing requirements for a licence to practise
- health and safety requirements
- regulated professions
- where specific parts of a study programme need placements in a given setting.

Where achievement demonstrated by experience is a requirement of a unit and a qualification, there may also be units that can only be achieved through RPL.

Claiming credit

The QCF is a framework that supports the recognition of individuals' achievements in a lifelong learning context. It will be important to promote the option of RPL to individuals and employers, explaining how individuals can claim credit for their prior learning. Explanations must be clear for individuals who may not understand or relate to the more technical and academic terminology often used in this context.

The individual is central to the RPL process; it will ultimately be their choice and responsibility to decide whether they want to claim credit in the QCF via an RPL route. Indeed, it may be useful to use the term 'claiming credit' instead of RPL as a way of making the concept more easily understood.

The idea of claiming credit stresses the active role the learner will have to play in RPL. The system of claiming credit must, therefore, include individuals receiving appropriate initial information and advice on the claiming credit process before they decide to make a claim. Individuals need to know when they are in a position to claim credit for learning or achievements outside of the formal training system.

Once individuals decide to make a claim, they will need the support of their employer/provider/organisation as well as access to specialist advice and support about the claiming credit process, including the timeframe and the different steps. Appropriately trained staff from within learning provider organisations should give specialist advice of this type.

References to RPL in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*

Although the aim of the guidance is not to regulate RPL but to build capacity within sector skills councils, awarding organisations and providers, the regulatory arrangements do refer to RPL. In preparation of the guidance stakeholders have stressed that such references are necessary to support the enhancement of the provision of RPL within the QCF.

The regulatory arrangements apply to the organisations that operate within the QCF and their accredited qualifications. They set the standard that all organisations and qualifications must meet to be recognised in the QCF. They therefore protect the interests of learners and promote public confidence in the national qualifications system.

The regulatory arrangements state that awarding organisations in the QCF are required to 'have in place the necessary systems and procedures to ensure... achievement is recognised through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) where this is appropriate'.⁴ In addition to this general requirement, awarding organisations must also ensure that 'each centre... where appropriate, has in place arrangements that allow for recognition of prior learning (RPL)'.⁵ The *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* therefore clearly establish an obligation for all awarding bodies to have in place systems for RPL, and to ensure that learners have appropriate access to these systems.

4 *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), section 5.6h.

5 *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), section 5.11g.

Section 2: Principles of RPL

The aim of RPL is to allow individuals to claim credit for learning or achievement that has not been previously certificated.

The following are principles for effective, consistent and quality-assured practice in RPL.

Principle 1

RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units and qualifications in the QCF, irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.

Principle 2

RPL must comply with all regulatory requirements for assessment. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

Principle 3

RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make his or her claim.

Principle 4

The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.

Principle 5

Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour as other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual can claim RPL against any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of the unit states otherwise. For example if an external assessment sets the standard of the learning outcome that the learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

Section 3: RPL in practice – from advice through to appeal

The process of RPL involves learners from the moment they consider making a claim and supports them through to the result of the assessment. Where procedures of RPL are not considered normal practice, sector skills councils, learning providers and awarding organisations will need to go through a planning and pre-implementation phase to ensure they lay a solid foundation for successful RPL. You can find suggestions on how to achieve this in Section 4.

It is possible for an individual to follow more than one route to claim credit within the QCF. The following are the stages an individual would take to make a claim for RPL via the more individually tailored route to credit.

Stage 1: General awareness about claiming credit – information, advice and guidance

Once individuals have made a decision to reflect on their learning they will need to know about:

- the process of claiming credit through RPL
- the sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers
- the administrative processes for RPL applications
- timelines, appeals processes and any fees and subsidies.

Stage 2: Pre-assessment – gathering evidence and giving information

An individual may decide to make his or her learning visible and to claim credit. This stage is vital to ensure that the candidate is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment.

During this stage the candidate will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant unit(s) within the QCF.

Stage 3: Assessment/documentation of evidence

Assessment as part of RPL and within the QCF is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a candidate's prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same quality-assurance processes of awarding organisations as any other part of the assessment process.

Stage 4: Awarding credit

Awarding organisations are responsible for awarding credit. The procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment. The credit is recorded in the learner record. Certificates, where appropriate, are awarded by the awarding organisation.

Stage 5: Feedback

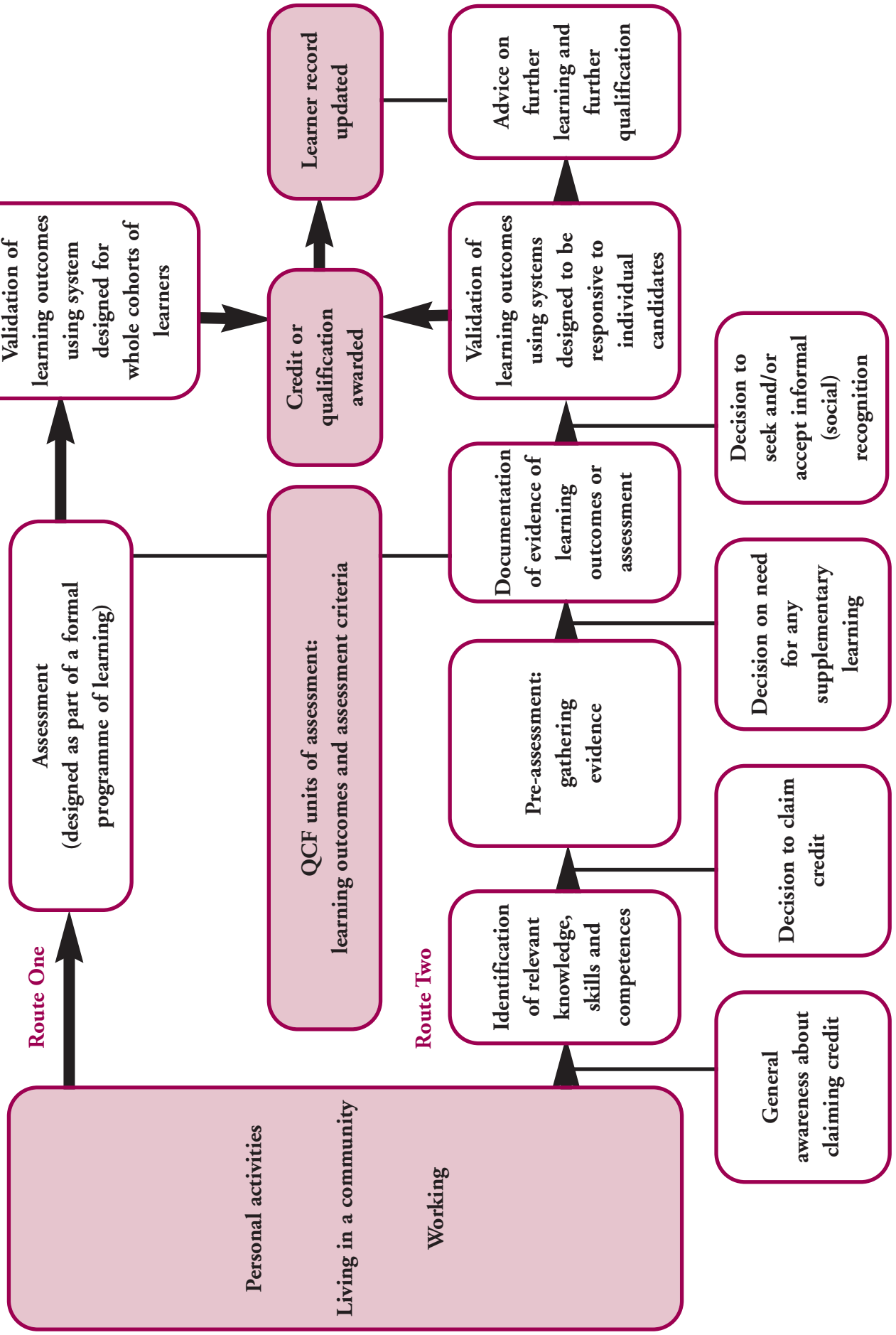
After the assessment the assessor will need to give feedback to the candidate, discussing the results and giving support and guidance on the options available to the candidate, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

Stage 6: Appeal

If claimants wish to appeal against a decision made about their claim for credit they would need to follow the standard appeals processes that exist within learning provider organisations and awarding organisations.

You can find a map of the different routes to RPL possible in the context of the QCF on page 12. The map illustrates two routes to RPL possible within the QCF. Both routes can be followed to claim credit for learning that has taken place through working, community or personal activities. Route one enables an individual to claim credit via a more formal or traditional route and would require the candidate to undertake an assessment designed as part of a formal learning programme for a whole cohort of learners. Alternatively, route two enables an individual to claim credit in a more individually tailored way and would require a candidate to follow the stages described above. Common to both routes are the QCF units of assessment (the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against which the learning is assessed) and the credit or qualification awarded.

Figure 1: RPL routes from learning to certification in the QCF (adapted from the European guidelines on the validation of non-formal and informal learning)



Section 4: Increasing RPL – from planning to action

Planning more RPL under the QCF

A planning stage is an important prerequisite for effective availability of RPL in order to:

- address and resolve any known or anticipated problems and issues
- seek and apply good practice
- identify political and organisational barriers to effective RPL and progression
- source funding.

Sector skills councils, awarding organisations, providers and funding organisations may want to carry out preparatory work in the following areas:

- auditing current practice, policy and procedures including a description of quality-assurance processes
- establishing the purposes and intended outcomes of RPL, taking into account the sector qualifications strategy (this may vary by sector)
- looking at any existing regulations and statutory requirements relating to RPL (such as professional body or statutory requirements and workplace arrangements and rules) and seeing whether any of these regulations enable or inhibit credit awarded through RPL and progression using RPL
- setting up the support structures candidates and staff need to achieve the aims of the sector and institution
- funding the costs and resource requirements of RPL.

Sector skills councils may want to identify:

- market needs / targets of the workforce and the sector
- which groups of employees are a priority for RPL
- strategies for building capacity using the most effective and efficient approaches

Awarding organisations are encouraged to develop:

- guidance on development of units that offer realistic access to RPL
- guidance for providers on assessment processes and RPL
- rules governing the awarding of credits based on learning achieved
- a statement of assessment methods and tools including moderation cycles to support RPL
- administrative policies and procedures that can support RPL processes
- a statement of the qualifications and skills RPL assessors are expected to have within relevant national standards.

Providers may want to develop or address the following:

- how to implement RPL based on the guidance awarding organisations give
- capacity of staff to manage the RPL process
- resourcing and costing of RPL
- tailoring planning towards careers, advice and guidance to individuals
- flexible provision of courses for individuals.

From planning to action

Stakeholders are central to ensuring that opportunities for RPL are maximised in the QCF. Motivations for doing so as well as the role stakeholders are likely to play will vary, as the following sections illustrate.

The motivations and role of the individual

In a labour market where employees change jobs with increasing frequency, there are many reasons for individuals to feel motivated to have their achievements recognised.

- Recognition boosts self-esteem; this may be particularly important for those who are disengaged from learning.
- Employees may want to avoid having to relearn knowledge or skills they already have in order to progress in a job or career.
- They may want to get recognition for prior learning without having to participate in a learning programme.
- For those returning to the workplace, claiming credit through RPL is a way to check whether their skills are up to date or whether they need some further learning or achievement to progress within or to re-enter the workplace. In this sense, RPL within the QCF can contribute to the more formative assessment of skills, identifying pathways for further learning or training.

Individuals are expected to play an active role in demonstrating their evidence against units of assessment. Therefore they need to be engaged and motivated, informed and supported to make a claim.

The motivations and role of employers

Employers may use RPL to:

- make the skills and competences of their staff visible
- contribute to and show commitment towards workforce development
- retain staff
- validate the learning and training that happens on the job
- check the knowledge, skills and competences of migrant workers
- fill skills gaps and shortages.

The motivations and role of sector skills councils

Sector skills councils recognise the importance of a qualified workforce, and many of them have indicated the need for more RPL to promote this. Sector skills councils are thus in a key position to play a leading role in promoting RPL in their sector.

Motivations for sector skills councils include:

- recognition of skills, knowledge and competences
- addressing skills shortages and gaps
- contributing towards the development of individual-centred career development systems and staff development
- increasing highly skilled and highly qualified workforces.

The actual role of sector skills councils in implementing RPL is likely to be most successfully carried out through relationships with awarding organisations. Sector skills councils are in a key position to act in a promotional role as well as supporting awarding organisations to enhance the provision and promotion of RPL aimed at employers.

The role of qualifications regulators in supporting RPL in the QCF

The QCF is a regulated framework that:

- maintains standards
- enables credit accumulation and transfer
- protects the interests of end-users.

The regulatory bodies are the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) in Wales, Ofqual in England and the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland.

The *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726) are designed to support the implementation of the QCF from August 2008 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Although it has been agreed with awarding organisations at this stage that

the processes of RPL do not need a regulatory, prescriptive approach, stakeholders agreed that there should be some reference to RPL in the regulatory arrangements. These have been implemented and can be found on pages 7 and 8.

The regulators have a role to ensure that the system is not simply RPL neutral but that RPL is promoted. Where RPL is provided the regulators will ensure that it is robust and accessible. This will be checked as part of the awarding organisation recognition process as well as being part of the regulators' monitoring policy. The QCF regulators will consider the provision of RPL arrangements, including their take-up and effectiveness, to determine whether requirements in the regulatory arrangements are appropriate and sufficient.

Those providers that have been recognised as awarding organisations may require further regulation in order to avoid conflict of interest situations and to ensure that they will consider the provision of RPL.

The motivations and role of awarding organisations

Awarding organisations play a leading role in:

- improving provision of and access to RPL
- quality assuring
- raising confidence in RPL processes including the mutual recognition of the results of RPL between awarding organisations.

Awarding organisations have a commitment to support all stakeholders in assessment and qualification, including both providers and candidates, by providing materials and services relating to:

- guidance and support
- qualifications/assessment choice
- information on processes and commitments
- progression routes.

Guidance and professional support throughout the process is vital for the majority of candidates and for providers. Awarding organisations have a duty to:

- provide materials and services that ensure processes are transparent and rational
- give both providers and candidates a clear sense of what each person must do to meet the requirements of the assessment and certification arrangements.

Awarding organisations are increasingly giving advice and materials that candidates can access directly, supporting centres in the process of guiding candidates through assessment and certification requirements.

Awarding organisations have a role to play in ensuring that units of assessment developed for QCF allow for RPL. This guidance does not describe or prescribe any assessment methods that awarding organisations should promote, but it is important that awarding organisations allow for alternative approaches that can be tailored to an individual's needs.

The motivations and role of providers

An increased capability and capacity for RPL at the level of providers and in enterprises is essential for RPL in the QCF to be a success. Providers and employers (for work-based practices) implement assessment and hence RPL processes. Providers are also the most important interface with individuals, responsible for both RPL and delivery.

Providers may be motivated to provide RPL to:

- offer more flexibility to individuals in their learning pathways and enable more inclusive provision
- raise the retention and success rate of learners
- attract new groups of individuals.

Providers are critical to the success of RPL because it needs tailored provision that links strongly to careers information and advice. In an increasingly demand-led system, providers that can show they can give such a tailored provision will be well placed to attract learners as well as public funding.

The role of improved careers information and advice

RPL is particularly important for individuals who lack formal qualifications – a group that is also a high priority for access to information, advice and guidance. (In England, publicly funded careers information and advice provision is targeted at adults who do not have a full level 2 or level 3 qualification.)

There are two types of careers information and advice relevant to the RPL process:

- specialist advice provided by professionals who have been trained in RPL practice and procedures
- generic information, advice and guidance for individuals exploring their career and learning needs.

While there is no formal framework as such for the specialist advice, it is fair to assume that this would primarily come from people experienced in RPL practice and procedures within learning provider organisations. Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) provides an example of an existing framework for specialist RPL professional support.⁶ Generic information, advice and guidance can be found from the following sources.

Publicly funded careers information and advice services for adults include:

- the learndirect careers advice national telephone and web services
- regional telephone access points, websites and face-to-face services, delivered through regional prime contractors under the nextstep brand
- the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) in Northern Ireland
- Careers Service Northern Ireland.

Agencies that give careers information and advice as part of a wider learning offer include:

- learning providers – further education, higher education, personal and community development learning and private training providers
- Jobcentre Plus advisers (and Jobcentre Plus contracted services)
- HR and training managers within organisations
- Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)
- voluntary and community learning initiatives
- sector skills councils (although these tend to work with learning providers rather than with individuals)
- awarding organisations.

Apart from formal provision, individuals are increasingly likely to inform themselves through the internet. The learner record may be developed further to provide information to the individual about the possibilities of RPL.

Adequate resources for RPL

As this guidance has indicated, RPL can have many benefits for individuals, employers, sector skills councils, awarding organisations and providers, and there are wider benefits for the economy and society as well. To achieve these benefits will require:

- adequate financial and human resources including more staff competent to support RPL procedures
- new RPL guidelines, quality assurance, monitoring and review processes

⁶ For more information, see Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) *New professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector* (2006) and *New professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in Wales* (2008); www.lluk.org.

- accessible information, advice and guidance for learners and employers.

Special infrastructure and information and communication technology tools can support wider or more effective approaches to RPL.

The QCF offers the possibility of creating a sustainable model for funding RPL. A significant increase in the effective demand for RPL could generate economies of scale.

A review of funding arrangements will help to ensure that the supply side responds to the potential demand, in part through ensuring that the funding bodies offer support for the process of claiming credit.

This work could include:

- mapping out the processes associated with RPL
- trialling the processes with providers
- taking stock of what processes within providers are already in place and what needs to change (leading possibly to a diagnostic tool for each provider to use)
- assessing and recording all barriers to delivery, including capacity issues and costs.

After taking these steps, the funding bodies will be able to review current funding arrangements to understand whether:

- they are sufficient as they stand
- they need to do further work to tailor the guidance to the specific processes outlined above
- they need to make further revisions to address specific and defined issues.

Providers that receive public funding in England can find more information from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the *LSC funding guidance 2008/09: Principles, rules and regulations* (version 3, www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy). In particular we refer providers to the section on ‘Accreditation of prior experience and learning’ for information on previously uncertificated experience and learning (pages 48–49, paragraphs 204–207) and the section on ‘Prior attainment – proportion of funding remaining field A51a’ for information on prior certificate learning and curriculum overlap within programmes (pages 56–57, paragraphs 251–255).

Annex A: Glossary

Term	Definition
additional information (about units)	Information added to the designated design specifications of the unit, some of which is required and some which may be specified, to support the processes of searching for, selecting, assessing and reviewing units from the databank; this is important for units that cannot be achieved through RPL or can only be achieved through RPL
appeal	The process through which an awarding organisation may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting a centre or an individual learner
assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria of a unit, or any additional assessment requirements of a qualification
assessment criteria	Descriptions of the requirements a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved
assessment standard	The standard that a learner is expected to reach in order to achieve credit for a unit, expressed through a combination of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of that unit
assessor	A person who assesses a learner's work
award of credits or qualifications	A certificate (electronic or paper-based) issued to an individual that recognises an achievement
awarding	The process by which learners' results are determined on the basis of the evidence produced through their assessment

awarding organisation	A body recognised by the qualifications regulators against the requirements set out in the regulatory arrangements to award credits and qualifications
comparability of assessment	The extent to which assessment outcomes are equivalent between centres, awarding organisations, units and qualifications and over time
condition of accreditation	Requirements, relating to non-compliance with the regulatory arrangements, that awarding organisations must meet that, although important, are not deemed sufficiently serious to delay or reverse an accreditation decision
credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes of a unit
credit accumulation	The process of putting together a combination of credits to meet the achievement requirements of a qualification
exemption	The facility for a learner to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a QCF qualification, using evidence of certificated, non-QCF achievement deemed to be of equivalent value
learner record	An authoritative record of all credit and qualification achievements made by an individual learner in the QCF
learning outcome	A statement of what a learner can be expected to know, understand or do as a result of a process of learning
national occupational standards (NOS)	Describe what a person needs to do, know and understand in a job to carry out the role in a consistent and competent way
monitoring	The review of, and reporting on, an organisation's compliance with the regulatory arrangements by the qualifications regulators
pathway	A route to the achievement of a qualification that requires a combination of credits to be achieved from particular units and is identified by an endorsement to a qualification title

provider	Normally, an organisation accountable to an awarding organisation for the assessment arrangements leading to the award of credit(s) or qualification(s); in the regulatory arrangements providers are described as ‘centre’
purpose and aim(s) of a unit	Provides additional information about a unit to users in the form of a succinct statement that clearly summarises the content of the unit
qualification	An award made to a learner for the achievement of the specified combination of credits, or credits and exemptions, required for that award
recognised organisation	A body recognised by the qualifications regulators, against the requirements set out in the regulatory arrangements, to perform one or more of the following functions: developing units; developing rules of combination; assessing and awarding credits and qualifications
recognition of prior learning (RPL)	A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning
reliability of assessment	The extent to which assessment results are an accurate measurement of a learner’s achievements against the requirements of a unit – reliable assessment repeatedly produces the same outcome without inherent bias or variability in the assessment instrument
required combinations of units	Units that must be counted together as part of a rule of combination for a qualification
rules of combination	A description of the credit accumulation requirements for the achievement of a named qualification
sector skills council	A body responsible for formulating and reviewing occupational standards for a specific sector across the UK, and for supporting the development of units and qualifications based on these standards; each SSC is an employer-led, independent organisation and is licensed by government

sector qualifications strategy	A specification of the current and future needs of a sector, with a timeline and action plan
standardisation of assessment	A process to ensure that assessment leading to the award of credits and qualifications is applied consistently by individuals, centres and awarding organisations
unique learner number (ULN)	The unique number that is used to identify an individual learner
unit	A coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria, with a title, credit value and level
unit databank	An repository within which all units used in qualifications are stored, classified and made available to users
validity of assessment	The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme – valid assessment gives an accurate measurement of what it is supposed to measure

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www.qca.org.uk/framework

www.wales.gov.uk

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The Qualifications and Credit Framework will form part of the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW).

The CQFW embraces all post-16 and higher education in Wales. Further details can be found at www.cqfw.net.

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