RPL Practitioner Network Steering Group

Terms of Reference (Revised September 2022)

Context

The Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioner Network is a national, voluntary, inclusive, cross sectoral network of practitioners who are involved in implementation and policy making for RPL. It is supported by a Steering Group which convenes network events and strives to keep open conversations across sectors that are relevant, productive and support shared understanding between different areas of practice and policy. We aim to be well informed and to play our part nationally and internationally in the development of effective RPL services.

The Steering Group of the RPL Practitioner Network undertook in late 2020 to review the terms of reference of the group to reflect the evolving contexts within which RPL operates.

In so doing, we acknowledge that national practice associated with the provision of the recognition of prior learning involves a range of different and evolving purposes. On foot of these purposes, its wide range of practitioners are drawn from:

- the breadth of education and training provision for the purposes of access, exemptions and achievement of awards/ parts of awards/ programmes
- regulatory / professional practice contexts
- guidance counsellors, guidance, careers and information services
- contexts which provide solely for personal validation and affirmation of learning achieved
- workplaces, including through performance management systems, for promotion, career management and progression and access to on-the-job opportunities for training and development
- social partners
- those engaging with skills audits/assessments and referral processes
- community education, 'third pillar', youth services and civil society
- voluntary bodies
- those implementing measures supporting social inclusion and cohesion where the recognition of learning is an important enabler
- RPL research and policy workers

Implementation of RPL processes is underpinned in some contexts by relevant legislation, and particular funding policies. However, it is also conceived within broader EU policy, with a direct commitment to citizens in all member states, for widespread availability of RPL. Practice in Ireland has grown organically. The range of support for practice is varied; yet in many contexts there is energy and deep seated commitment to excellent practice and innovation.

Changes in legislation (and programme for government) places obligation on providers to meet RPL needs. Developments in practice can inform decisions at the level of national policy. Equally, strong national policy directions will support implementation and good practice.

It is vital to acknowledge the range of roles and associated responsibilities involved in RPL practice nationally as the key contextual backdrop for the operation of the Network and the individual practice of members (practitioners). The term 'practitioner' is broadly understood to embrace field practice and those who enable RPL services through the diversity of roles from management, quality assurance, research and policy formation, acknowledging our shared ambitions.

Aims of the RPL Practitioner Network

The National RPL Practitioner Network will:
- Create and maintain Practitioner Connections
- Support the development of communities of practice, facilitate opportunities to learn across sectors, thematically and regionally, while acknowledging the context of the continued development of broader assessment practices in which RPL is located
- Enable knowledge sharing, the practical development of repositories and toolkits, the development of a common language and consistent approaches and outcomes from practice as appropriate
- Promote good practice that is informed by international and national best practice amongst policy makers and practitioners whilst leveraging the special role of QQI in terms of national and international practices
- Provide and empower a coherent voice to shape and inform policy

RPL Practitioner Network Steering Group

The RPL Practitioner Network is served by a pragmatic voluntary Steering Group.

Key Principles and Values

This Steering Group will operate according to the key principles/values of:
- inclusivity
- professionalism
- effective communication
- promotion of learning
- objectivity
- provision of stability
- and shared ownership

Terms of Reference

Membership of the voluntary Steering Group is typically representative of the diversity of Education and Training and other RPL interests, nominated by representative bodies as individual practitioner members and organisations. They serve and support network interests enriched by personal and organisational expertise and insight.

Institutional/agency representatives also serve to support dissemination and wider engagement in RPL.

Co-convenors will be appointed on a biannual basis and reflect the diversity of the membership of the group.

The RPL Practitioner Network Steering Group will meet at least 4 times per annum and will have a quorum of half the regular membership plus one.

D Denieffe and A Higgins
Co-convenors 2020-2022