| Document Title | Recognition of Prior Learning (QQI programmes only) |
|---|---|
| Policy Area | Area 3: Programmes of Education and Training |
| Document Code (version #) | QAP3-4 |
| **Applies to** | ☐ All<br>☒ Specific *(QQI programmes only)* |
| | ☐ Staff only  ☐ Learners only  ☒ Staff and Learners |

| Document Owner | Director of Quality & Academic Affairs |
|---|---|
| Approved by | Academic Council |

| Approval date | 1st March 2019 |
|---|---|
| Effective date | 4th March 2019 |

| Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols | - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI<br><br>- Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI<br><br>- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012<br><br>- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)<br><br>- QQI Policy Restatement - Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training – NQAI (2003, Restated 2015)<br><br>- Policy and Criteria for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (2015), QQI<br><br>- Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training (2005), NQAI |
|---|---|

# Table of Contents

# 1. PURPOSE

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including certified learning and experiential learning). In the context of SQT, the process is used to determine eligibility for prospective learners to access a QQI programme.

# 2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

Given the short duration of SQT's programmes, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is explicitly used for the purpose of gaining entry/access to a programme. RPL <u>does not apply</u> for advanced entry to programmes, exemptions from any aspect of a programme or access to an award.

**Common Award System Exemptions:** Notwithstanding the above, QQI recognises awards previously awarded by FETAC. Some of these awards are mapped to CAS (Common Award System) components and can be used to claim exemptions. This mapping is based on sufficient comparability between the learning outcomes of the two components. QQI has published lists of these mappings. SQT may claim these exemptions on behalf of learners but only under specific conditions set out by QQI.

# 3. DEFINITIONS

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is defined as "The process by which prior learning is given a value. It is a means by which prior learning is formally identified, assessed and acknowledged" (NQAI, 2005). RPL encompasses all forms of prior learning, including formal/accredited learning (certified learning); nonformal/informal/experiential learning (learning outside the formal education system, through the workplace and through experience).
- **Access** is the process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required.
- **Transfer** is the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill and competence acquired.
- **Progression** is the process by which learners may progress from one programme of education and training to another programme (usually from a lower to higher level).
- **RPL Assessor** is a suitably qualified subject matter expert. In the case of SQT this role is undertaken by the Programme Director or Tutor. The RPL assessor is responsible for assessing submitted assessment materials/portfolio in accordance with this procedure and the award standard.

# 4. POLICY

SQT recognises the importance of lifelong learning and widening access to education. It is committed to recognising the achievements and attainments of prospective learners, and their development of knowledge and skills gained from the academic or professional arena, or life experience. In doing so, SQT explicitly encourages applications from mature learners and operates a process for assessing

existing qualifications and prior learning for access to its programmes. The prior knowledge / experience required to successfully participate in and complete a programme are set out in the entry requirements section in each programme validation document. This information is also published on SQT's website under the entry requirements for each programme.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is as follows:

- The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs has overall responsibility for ensuring that RPL is recognised as a valid method of entry to relevant programmes and that procedures for RPL are made known to prospective learners and individuals with responsibility for RPL.
- The Course Administration Manager is responsible for ensuring that information relating to programmes and arrangements for RPL is available to prospective learners. He/she also addresses queries from prospective learners and In-house Course Organisers. He/she is also responsible for notifying applicants of the outcome and for making the appropriate adjustments to learner records.
- The assessment of RPL applications is undertaken by RPL Assessors (Programme Director or Tutors). The administration of this process is carried out by the Course Administration Manager and is supported by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs, as necessary.
- The External Examiner is responsible for reviewing a sample of RPL applications from learners to ensure that SQT's principles and procedures for RPL are being applied consistently and appropriately (QQI HE programmes only).

## 6. PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin the policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

1. Guidelines and procedures are developed in compliance with the protocols and standards outlined in QQI: Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013, and the NQAI document: Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training (2003, restated 2015).
2. SQT is committed to providing clear and transparent information to learners through programme documentation and queries are dealt with by the relevant Course Administration Manager.
3. All supporting documents (transcripts from other institutions etc) must be issued by the relevant educational institution and properly certified as genuine copies.
4. SQT reserves the right to seek supporting evidence from the named educational institution referred to in the application and where appropriate to request reference documentation from an employer or referee.
5. The RPL Assessor (Programme Director or Tutor) is responsible for the assessment of the individual RPL case. In the case of newly appointed Tutors, the Programme Director is responsible for inducting the new Tutor in the process and initially moderating all judgements and decisions.

6. Decisions regarding RPL are made based on the judgement(s) of qualified academic staff who are competent to make these decisions.

7. Applicants with non-standard qualifications (eg. International qualifications) are assessed to establish if their prior learning is equivalent to the validated programme entry requirements. Non-EU qualifications presented for entry onto level 6, 7 or 8 programmes are assessed for comparability with Irish qualifications using National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Ireland database of international qualifications.

8. The onus is on each applicant to provide all necessary information and documentation required in order for a judgement to be made. The final decision will be based on the evidence provided.

9. SQT will endeavour to ensure that the decision process is fair, consistent and transparent in accordance with the procedure set out below.

# 7. PROCEDURE FOR EVALUATING PRIOR LEARNING FOR ENTRY TO A QQI PROGRAMME

This section outlines SQT's procedures for assessing nonstandard certified and experiential learning for the purpose of accessing SQT programmes which are validated by QQI.

## 7.1. Verification of Prior Certified Learning
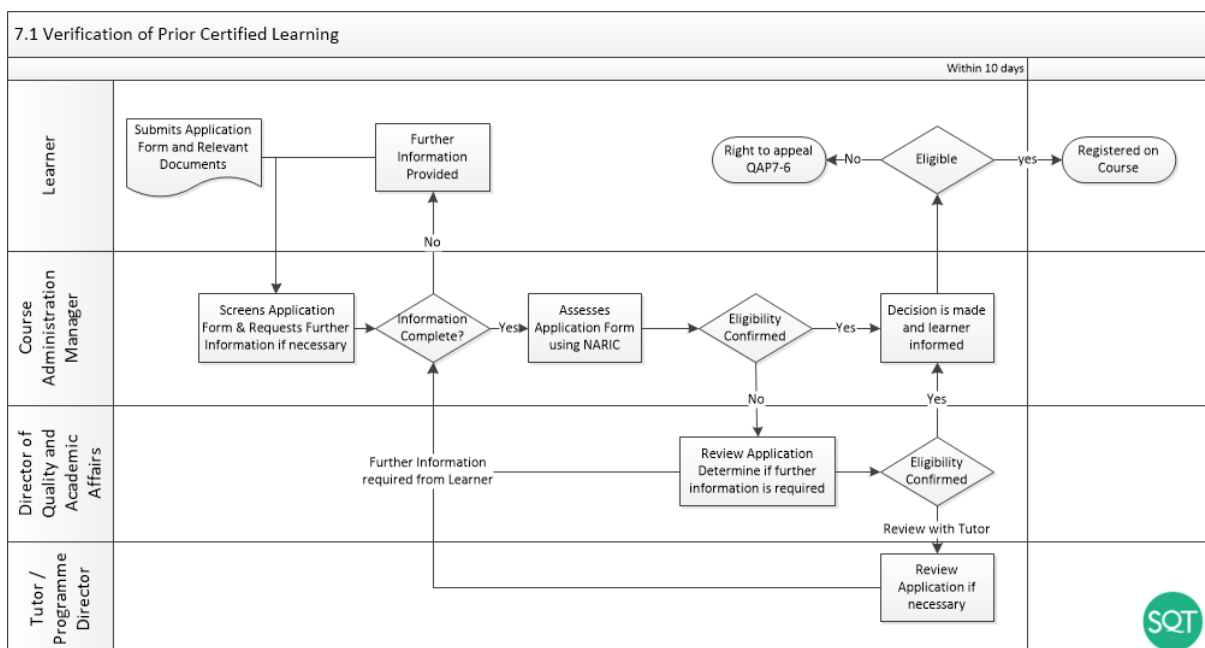
The following procedure is applied to applicants with non-standard qualifications.

1. The applicant contacts the Course Administration Manager and completes a direct application form for their chosen programme. Information required at this stage includes for example, diploma supplement, academic transcript etc.

2. The Course Administration Manager screens the application and if necessary, requests further clarification from the applicant or information which may include programme content descriptions, learning outcomes etc

3. Once all information is gathered, the Course Administration Manager evaluates the application to establish if the applicants prior certified learning is equivalent to the standard programme entry requirements. Non-EU qualifications presented for entry onto HE Level 6, 7 or 8 programmes are verified for comparability with Irish qualifications on the NFQ using the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Ireland database of international qualifications.

4. In certain circumstances, for example where qualification information is not available via NARIC, the matter is referred to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. If sufficient information is available, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs will request the Programme Director to evaluate the programme information to consider eligibility. Telephone interviews may also be conducted by the Programme Director at this stage to ascertain the candidate's suitability.

5. The Course Administration Manager advises the applicant of the decision. Decisions with respect to eligibility are finalised within 10 working days.

## 7.2. **Verification of Prior Uncertified Learning**
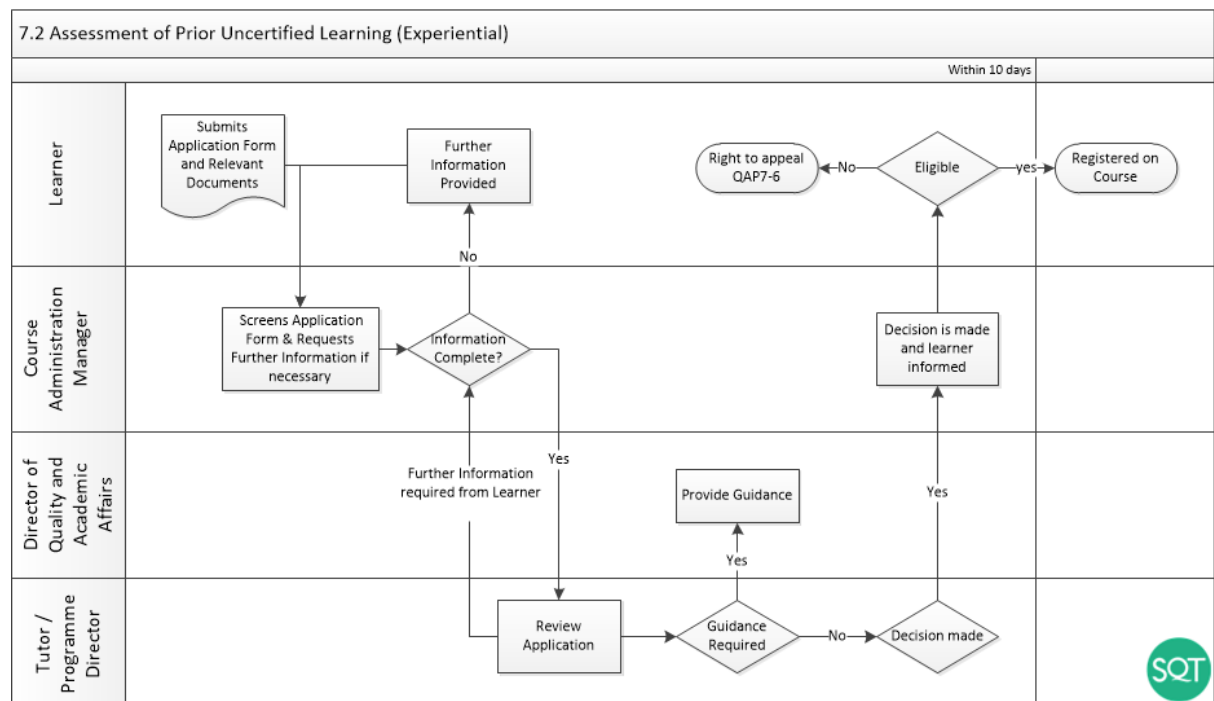


1. The applicant contacts the Course Administration Manager and completes a direct application form for their chosen programme.

2. Applicants that do not meet the standard educational entry requirements are asked to provide experiential learning information (specific to each programme) which is reviewed for qualifying under the RPL mechanism.

3. The Course Administration Manager screens the application and if necessary requests further information or clarification from the applicant.

4. Once all information is gathered, the Course Administration Manager refers the information to the relevant RPL Assessor (Programme Director or Tutor) for review.

5. In some cases, the RPL Assessor may seek further information or clarification from the applicant. This may be provided through further documentary evidence. When deemed necessary telephone interviews are conducted to ascertain the applicants suitability for the programme. When verifying / assessing uncertified (prior experiential) learning the assessor will consider the following:

    a. The likely ability of the applicant to meet the learning outcomes;

    b. The ability of the applicant to meet the standard of learning on the NFQ;

    c. The ability of the applicant to demonstrate that they are capable of applying the learning in a new context.

   In certain circumstances, the RPL Assessor may seek guidance and direction from the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

6. The RPL Assessor provides feedback on their assessment of the application to the Course Administration Manager who advises the applicant of the decision. Decisions with respect to eligibility are finalised within 10 working days.

7. The External Examiner reviews samples of APEL applications to formally moderate the process in advance of each Examination Board meeting.

# 8. APPEAL OF RPL DECISIONS

The applicant has the right to appeal the decision in relation to RPL. Appeals must be made within 5 working days of the decision. All appeals must be made in writing using the Non-Assessment Appeal Form (F49). The appeal will be processed in line with QAP7-6: Academic Appeals. The decision of the Appeals Board is final.

## 9. POLICY MONITORING

| Responsibility | Frequency | Methods |
|---|---|---|
| QA Committee | As per QA audit schedule | - Review of QQI policy to ensure updates are captured |
| Director of Quality and Academic Affairs | Each Examination Board (HET) | - The External Examiner is responsible for monitoring RPL applications from learners to ensure that SQT's principles and procedures for RPL have been applied consistently and appropriately.<br>- A comparison of pass/ failure /withdrawal rates relating to learners availing of RPL mechanisms is presented at each examination board meeting. |

## 10. DOCUMENT CONTROL

| Version No | Approval Date | Description of Revision | Originator | Approved By |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.0 | 1/3/19 | Complete revision and new document format. | Director of Quality and Academic Affairs | Academic Council |