

Forum Insights

PROJECT TITLE:

Recognising Prior Learning (RPL) with an online ePortfolio assessment tool and an open online RPL assessor skills course for Higher Education staff www.myexperience.ie

My Experience Project Lead:

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Keywords:

Recognition of Prior Learning, RPL, ePortfolio, access to Higher Education, flexible learning, life long learning, online assessment.

My Experience Project Background:

The Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA) is a group of Higher Education Institutes in Ireland including GMIT, IT Sligo and LYIT, working towards Technological University status. In 2012, a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) development team within the CUA initiated a project titled 'My Experience' to inform, support and facilitate Irish or international applicants in applying for RPL to gain entry onto a programme or seek exemptions from parts of a programme. In 2016, the My Experience Project team was awarded funding from the National Forum to further enhance the development of the RPL Toolkit and offer a Roadshow as part of the TEL Week plans. This involved collaborating and sharing the My Experience RPL Toolkit across the CUA and with WIT and DCU. Since 2015, the team have released a My Experience RPL Toolkit including: a RPL online portfolio assessment tool built on Moodle, a RPL information website at www.myexperience.ie, an online course on RPL Skills for higher education staff at <http://cpd.learnonline.ie>, and a level 9, 10 ECTS teaching development module aimed at RPL assessors and mentors.

Since the release of the RPL online assessment tool, over 100 RPL applicants have applied for advanced entry or access to a programme in the CUA and built an ePortfolio RPL application online at www.myexperience.ie. From 2015-2016, partner collaborations, assessor and mentor experiences and the RPL applicant experience has informed adaptations and enhancements to the RPL assessment ePortfolio tool and staff training requirements.

The need to develop the My Experience RPL Toolkit arises from a number of factors including the fact that the lifelong learning participation rate is just 7.3% in Ireland compared to the EU average of 10.5% (National Forum, 2015). With regards to the employed sector, it is just 6% participation in Ireland, compared

to the EU average of 11% (CEDEFOP, 2015). Therefore, there is great potential to promote RPL access pathways to higher education among the experienced workforce in Ireland that are seeking to up skill and gain a formal qualification.

Further challenges identified during the project development include the lack of awareness that Recognition of Prior Learning access opportunities exist. Candidates need guidance on how to build a portfolio of evidence; and assessors are unsure how to match experiential evidence to learning outcomes. The My Experience RPL Toolkit helps address these issues and creates more opportunities for mature learners to gain advanced entry to a programme at GMIT, IT Sligo LyIT, WIT and DCU in the future.

The TEL week project team will continue to collaborate and plans are in place to release an advanced Moodle version of the RPL assessment ePortfolio tool in August 2016 to all partners. A follow-up review and evaluation will take place in the Autumn 2016 to get feedback on Version 3 of the assessment tool and the open online skills course at <http://cpd.learnonline.ie>

If further enhancement funding is awarded in the future, the team would like to expand the higher education network partners engaging with the My Experience RPL Toolkit. This would enable a national RPL Assessors network to emerge who can then share practice and experience around managing RPL ePortfolio applications.

For further information visit

www.myexperience.ie

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CEDEFOP (2015), *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*. Available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3073>

National Forum (2015), *A Current Overview Of Recognition Of Prior Learning (RPL) In Irish Higher Education*. Available at <http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Project-2.pdf>