



## **RPL Guide for Students (R16)**

# LEONARDO DA VINCI Transfer of Innovation Project "RELATE - PROMOTING THE RECOGNIZABILITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION"

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For more information on the project "RELATE" go to our website www.relate-project.eu

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#### Introduction

RPL guide for students is a result of work package (WP) 8. The aim of this work package is to draw conclusions from those experiences and to formulate guidelines and recommendations for a wide range of stakeholders from all over Europe. While formulating these documents, the project partners took into account the needs, potential benefits and objectives of different target groups.

The aim of the result is to propose a RPL guide for students which the partners from the project as well as any other educational institution can use and if necessary also adapt (e.g add or remove information).

#### **RPL Guide for Students**

#### Have you studied in VET school and would you like to go to HE?

Look at the possibilities of Recognition of Prior Learning!

#### What is RPL?

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the process by which your competences (existing skills, knowledge and experience) gained throughout your life - regardless of how they have been acquired - can be recognised so you would not have to learn the same thing again.

The prior learning may have been obtained:

- from school
- from in-service trainings
- from work experience
- from voluntary work
- from life experience





#### What are the benefits of RPL for me?

- RPL can result in the awarding of credit points.
- It saves you time in achieving a degree as you do not have to repeat the learning you already have gained.
- It enables you to identify gaps in your competences.

### How does the process look like?

During the RPL process you would need to demonstrate what you have really learned and how it corresponds to educational programme or the professional standard. The process involves assessment of your existing skills and knowledge to determine the competencies you have. The assessment is aligned with relevant types of supporting evidence, e.g.

- practical demonstrations in the workplace or simulated environment via video/DVD, or web tools
- work samples or photos of work, e-portfolios
- CV/resume, job descriptions
- assessment conversations
- references and support from supervisors
- training certificates
- performance reviews

#### How do I start?

- You can start with checking the information on the webpage and consulting a RPL counsellor, who can introduce the procedure and requirements.
- After that you can fill the application and add the necessary proof materials and additional information.





- Once you have submitted the application, the assessors, who are experts in the field will
  assess by comparing your competences with learning outcomes and decide whether it
  corresponds.
- After assessment you will be given feedback and in case of negative results you have the right to appeal the decision.

As you understand, there are usually three parties in the RPL application process: an applicant, an adviser and an assessor. Each of these parties has different tasks and responsibilities:

- The applicant checks the rules on RPL established by the educational institution; checks the requirements of the programme they want to do, to find out which competences may be suitable for recognition; submits a standard application along with necessary evidence; is liable for the correct information; submits additional evidence, if requested to.
- The counsellor informs the applicant of valid requirements and procedure; assists the applicant in preparing the application (but will not write it for the applicant); verifies that the application is filled in correctly and all necessary information and documents are included; offers advice and support to the applicant; checks the process complies with the rules.
- The assessor has experience in the area or activity being assessed; is responsible for ensuring that the prior learning to be recognised meets the requirements of the programme; makes a decision in the context of the whole study programme; gives feedback and recommendations to the applicant.

## RPL process timeline

Each institution has set their detailed timeline for the RPL process. The deadlines for students are connected with the academic calendar. Information about deadlines can be asked from the counsellor.

The assessor gives the decision on time to make the student be able to rearrange his/her personal studies. For example: in SUAS, based on the RPL guidelines, the application has to be handled within 14 days and either positive or negative answer should be given to the student. At Tallinn University the assessor has 30 days to assess the application, but in case of courses which start on the same semester, the decision will be made much faster so the students can make changes to their study plan.





In general: the sooner the application is handed in by the student, the sooner the assessment can begin.

#### Additional information about RPL

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process to evaluate the knowledge, competences and skills gained through prior learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. In more simplified terms, RPL means that it is possible to take into account prior knowledge and experience regardless of how they were acquired in order to avoid learning what has already been learnt.

Recognition of prior learning is connected essentially with the development of education, promotion of life-long education and the internationalisation of education. The basis is the principle of life-long learning, defining that the competence of the student consists of both the competence acquired through formal education, non-formal learning and learning acquired in everyday work.

The goals of RPL are: to support learners' personal and career development, including confidence building and aspiration raising; to enable learners to gain entry to higher education programmes as an alternative to traditional entry requirements; to gain ECTS credits within higher education programmes or to get a partial or a full degree.

The central prerequisites in RPL are that the curricula which is based on competences, assessment criteria and student-orientation (Keurulainen, 2008). Previous studies, life experience and competence build the basis for a critical assessment of one's own knowledge and skills and also a potential start of the process of RPL. But what is most important is the way how the prior knowledge or skill corresponds to the educational programme or professional standard as the evaluation and credit transfer of prior learning is always carried out vis-a-vis the studies defined by the curriculum.

The learner has to be able to describe and analyse what they have learned from the experience and to demonstrate that it is compatible with the learning outcomes of the course they are applying for. To do that an application must be submitted. The educational institution can provide the appropriate form, which will set out how to report prior learning. The application form may vary slightly in each educational institution, but the basic idea is the same everywhere: it is intended to allow the applicant to show the range of their competences. Student can provide information and assistance when filling in the application.





**Documents and materials that can be used as evidence** and attached to the application form include: academic report, certificates, job description, analysis, case study, portfolio, projects prepared, character assessment etc. Evidence should show that the competences are acquired by the applicants themselves and that the knowledge and skills meet the required level.

RPL assessment involves examining not the experience itself, but what has been learned from it; knowledge, skills, competence, including the ability to generalise and apply the knowledge; correspondence to the subject, module, curriculum goals and learning outcomes or professional standards; the ability to cope at the specified level. It is important to stress that each skill claimed by the applicant does not have to be re-examined. Applicants can support their claim through documents establishing that they have completed an academic course, or that they have relevant practical experience. If necessary the assessors can ask additional information, e.g. learning portfolios, demonstration of the ability, learning diaries, interviews, written or oral tests.





# List of abbreviations

RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
LO	Learning Outcomes
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
LA	Learning Agreement
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
ECTS	European Credit Transferable System
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training