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Engaging & Embedding Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Lifelong Learning

HEA & WIT Research Project

Dr. Maeve O'Grady, Dr. Zeta Dooly, Dr. Helen Murphy, Laura Widger

AGENDA

- Overview of the research project
- Research Challenge
- Methodology and implementation
- Progress to date and initial findings
- Future plans and emerging challenges



Connect, Engage, Collaborate

Enhancing measures to support RPL in the HE sector



Identifying



Documenting



Assessing



Recognition

Overview



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- Research Team

- Project Manager: Laura Widger, Dr. Helen Murphy
- RPL Academic Advisors: Dr. Maeve O'Grady, Dr. Zeta Dooly
- Industry Liaison: Edmond Connolly
- Technical design: WIT TSSG Tommy McDonald, Dave Hearne

- Competitive tender

- Higher Education Authority Innovation and Transformation Call 2018

- Objective:

This project will support the aim of enhancing measures to support Recognition of Prior Learning in the HE sector





Aim & Objectives

Aim

- The project aims to increase the number of lifelong learners using RPL to access destination awards in WIT



Objectives

- Define required destination awards in consultation with industry
- Identify formal, informal and non-formal learning taking place in each industry sector in the agreed discipline areas
- Create a mapping tool for each destination award
- Develop an on-line portal based on the identified destination awards
- Pilot and test the on-line portal with lifelong learners
- Evaluate user experience, refine and disseminate using existing industry networks and the South East Regional Skills Forum

RPL Assessment Principles

- Valid
- Reliable
- Fair
- Quality Assured
- Transparent

→ This research will focus on non-standard applications access/entry and exemptions

Research Challenge

- Low levels of participation in lifelong learning in Ireland
 - Below EU **average** 8.9%*
 - Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate is significantly behind the top performers i.e. Denmark (31%), Sweden (29%) and Finland (25%).
 - Ireland is ranked 20th out of 28 EU countries**
 - Ireland's Action Plan for Education*** has the goal of increasing the lifelong learning participation rate to 10% by 2020 and 15% by 2025
 - All learning is valuable but the challenge is to match specific criteria

*References: *SOLAS (2017) report, **Eurostat 2017, DES, 2016–2019****

Research Challenge/Problem statement



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- RPL can be a **complex** and **cumbersome** process for both institution and learner (Sheridan et al, 2015).
- A key limitation is the **gap** between a workplace learner's understanding of learning achievements, and those required to be matched in a destination award.
- Theory relates to **New Literacy Studies**, using a strengths-based approach to counteract the deficit model in lifelong learning.
- The voice of the lifelong learner in the **User Experience (UX)** is critical in determining how access can be better facilitated.
- The intended outcomes are:
 - an online RPL portal
 - improved user experience
 - increased numbers availing of RPL.





Emerging research/practical questions*

- How can we connect existing practices to RPL?
- Are learning outcomes understood and accepted?
- Can we adopt common templates?
- Are we using the full potential of new technology?

*Dr. Ernesto Villalba-Garcia of Cedefop – RPL Practitioner Network Conference Nov 2019



Barriers and enablers

- Fundamental obstacles:
 - prior educational experiences, levels of educational attainment and access to relevant learning opportunities.
- Visionary solution:
 - create an on-line RPL portal that will target and facilitate adult learners (lifelong learners) with upper second level qualifications to participate and engage with higher education in the South East.
 - The project and portal will be based on the development of access routes into 6 destination award programmes at NFQ Levels 6 - 9. These destination awards will represent the skills needs of six industry sectors identified in the South East.
- Targeted sectors:
 - Agri-Food, Tourism, Global Business and Finance,
 - Construction/Manufacturing, Bio-Pharma & MedTech and ICT.



Targeted destination awards

Business:

Diploma in Lean Fundamentals (L7) Business

https://www.wit.ie/courses/lv17_diploma_lean_fundamentals



Science:

Bachelor of Science Ordinary Degree in Good Manufacturing Practice and Technology

[https://www.wit.ie/courses/bachelor of science in good manufacturing practice and technology](https://www.wit.ie/courses/bachelor_of_science_in_good_manufacturing_practice_and_technology)

Computing:

HDip Computer Science

<https://www.wit.ie/courses/hdipcomputerscience2yearparttime>

Methodology and implementation



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- Requirements gathering
- Stakeholder workshops
- Mapping of work based learning to academic accreditation
- Translating the criteria and learning outcomes of the awards into workplace discourse
- Identifying readily-accessible evidence-gathering methods
- Identification of Destination awards & Project Advisory Committee
- Identification of generic system architecture for destination awards
- Pilot and test online portal, user interface





Stakeholder engagement

Industry

- Sun Life Financial
- tbc

WIT Course Leader

- Eamonn De Leaster
- Aidan Walsh, Patricia Bowe
- Bernie Graham, Eleanor Kent

RPL Administration

- Martina Mullaly, Joan Mangan
- Neil Quinlan

Academic advisors

- Maeve O'Grady, Laura Widger, Zeta Dooly



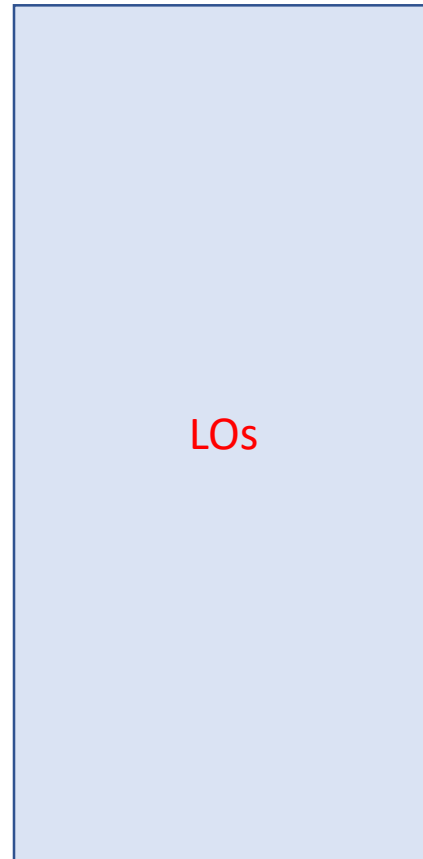
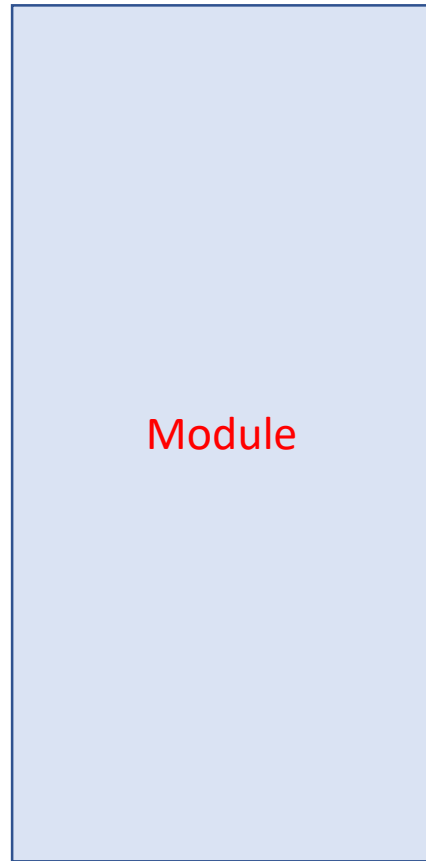
Project Schedule

- Major milestones :

- Requirements gathering and validation
- Initial development of wireframes
- Applied WIT online style/design (look and feel) to RPL portal design
- RPL Process broken down and streamlined for efficiency opportunities
- Development of click-throughs
- Iterations of portal development, validation and sign-off with stakeholders
- FAQs

Exemption Engine

matching process to eliminate gap between academic LOs and work based competencies





Progress to date and initial findings

- Alignment of destination awards with industry needs to be cognisant of entry requirements to job (i.e. interview criteria)
- Process for evaluation and validation is cumbersome – may need to implement a framework for evaluation
- 2 pronged approach
 - Digitisation of existing non-standard RPL process across schools in WIT
 - Process improvement initiatives to align consistency and fairness to student applicants

Progress to date and initial findings



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- Requirements gathering – workshops, meetings
 - User stories, personas, functionality
- Engagement with stakeholders;
 - Establishment of 3 project advisory committees for 3 destination awards
 - admin, academic program lead, industry, student
- RPL Portal development
 - Initial development of wireframes & click through
 - Validation of 1st destination award
 - Pilot applications and evaluation
- RPL portal will be available for students to use for entry to the destination awards (i.e. H.Dip in Computer Science) January 2021
- Established a Community of Practice in WIT for RPL

wireframes

Application - RPL - H.Dip in Computer Science

Personal Information [View](#)


Work Experience [View](#)

Enter your personal details. All fields are optional. Empty fields will not be included in the final document.

Education [View](#)

Skills & Competencies [View](#)

Review & Submit [View](#)



Work Experience

Current / Most Recent

Job Title Nature Of Business

Company Location

Start Date End Date Im currently working in this role

List key Responsibilities of this role.

Skills & Competencies used in carrying out the duties described above.

Provide

Have you been promoted in this Job Yes No If Yes, give details

[+](#) Upload workplace certificates if any

V.1 Functions & Features - User / Applicant

- Sign up / Login
- Setup profile / CV - Personal, LinkedIn, Upload CV (Information can populate application form for course)
- Course Selection
- Course information / Requirements
- Multi step form (some sections can be automatically populated from Profile - (These can be edited to add more detail if required)
 - Personal
 - Photo
 - Education
 - Work experience
 - Managerial skills
 - Digital Skills
 - Documentation
 - Language
 - Cover Letter



- Application Form Preview
- Submit course selection and completed form
- View reviewed submission /Make changes accordingly
- Options / settings

Add files/ Documents to give the option to load from device or cloud storage such as Google drive, One drive or dropbox.

Please note as further research is undertaken the features & functions list may change due to user testing.



Future plans and emerging challenges



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- Entry /access for non-standard student applications
- 3/6 destination awards in development
- Area of exemptions (requirements and validation) yet to be explored)
- Accessibility of academic and industry jargon
- Prioritisation of work in relation to digitizing the process and enabling process improvements in parallel – working with existing stakeholders and processes

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Added Value for Industry Stakeholder engagement

- An access route for employees who do not meet the standard entry criteria, but who have the capability and interest, to apply to the destination awards
- Applicants will gain an understanding of how specific aspects of their work based learning matches entry/exemption requirements.



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Questions?

Thanks for listening