

RPL (recognition of prior learning) in the Dublin Institute of Technology

For University study visit from Finland

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Distinctions in meaning

- Certificated learning = formal learning
*(Thus – accreditation of prior certificated learning **APCL**)*
- Experiential learning = non-formal and informal learning in workplaces etc
*(Thus – accreditation of prior experiential learning **APEL**)*

Purposes of RPL in the DIT

- **Entry** to the **first** stage of an undergraduate programme where the applicant is 'mature' and perhaps not a school-leaver
- **Advanced entry** to a stage beyond the entry stage on the basis of having achieved the required learning already
- **Progression** from one programme to a higher one
- **Transfer** from one programme/college to another
- **Exemption** from modules on a programme for similar learning at the same level
- **Non-standard entry** to **postgraduate** programmes where the applicant may not have the honours degree required
- **Application** for award of a full degree such as a PhD
- Combined with new **learning contracts for up-skilling or re-skilling**
- **Design of programmes for industry/companies/organisations**
- **Government Labour Market Activation Initiatives**

Award Types

- **Major** (bachelor, master, doctorate, etc – usually of 120 ECTS credits or more)
- **Minor** (usually less than 120 credits – at any level)
- **Special purpose** – *sometimes depends on prior learning achieved*
- **Supplemental** – always builds on prior learning

Areas using RPL in the DIT +

- Computer Science
- Pharma. industry
- Electronic Engineering
- Construction
- Transport engineering
- Catering and tourism industry
- Journalism
- Architectural Technology

Policy and Practice

- RPL **Policy** document approved
- General **Assessment Regulations** include RPL
- **Quality Assurance** Handbook includes arrangements for RPL
- **Module template** includes RPL
- Formal **training** for staff, workshops, briefings, consultancy, publications, research etc

Labour market perspective

- Continuum of RPL models
- RPL in continuing professional development (CPD)
- Combining RPL with learning 'contracts' for a higher qualification

Key principles

1. **SUBSIDIARITY** to programme level with quality assurance oversight within agreed policies
2. RPL models should be **appropriate** and **fit-for-purpose**
3. RPL should be used to establish the applicant's **capacity to succeed** and benefit on a programme
4. **Trust** and **confidence** in DIT awards should be maintained in any RPL model

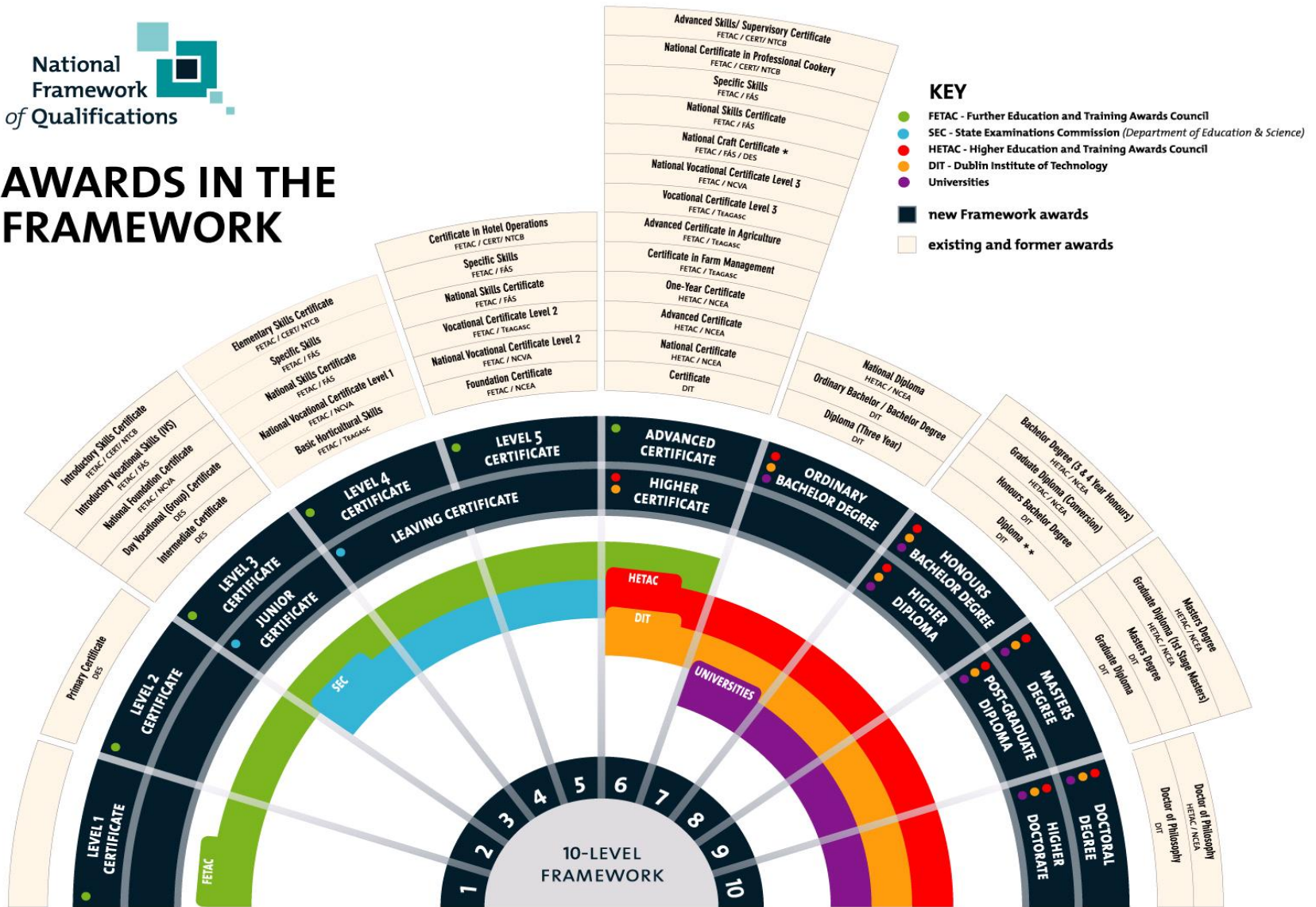
Counselling & Mentoring

- RPL information for applicants on the **website** with contact points
- **No** central *mentoring* or *counselling* service provided – decision was **subsidiarity** to the academic programme
- **Entry requirements** are **clearly stated** on website and in programme documents – formal procedure to change requirements

Exemplar models and documents

- BSc (Hons) in **Architectural Technology** (Level 8)
- **BTech Transport Engineering** (Level 7)
- **BSc in Manufacture of Medicinal Products**
- Higher Certificate in **Computing**
- **RPL in Culinary Arts**
- Progression in **Electrical Services Engineering**
- **Journalism** (Honours degree by RPL for alumni of the National Diploma in Journalism)

AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK



HE LEVELS Irish National Framework of Qualifications

Note: The outcomes at each level include those of all the lower levels in the same sub-strand.

Source: NQAI National Framework of Qualifications Page 17.

	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 8	LEVEL 9	LEVEL 10
Knowledge Breadth	Specialised Knowledge in a broad area	Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas	An understanding of theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning	A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge Kind	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory	Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialized areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers
Know-how and Skill Range	Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialized skills and tools	Demonstrate specialized technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialized area of study skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialized research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials
Know-how and Skill Selectivity	Formulate responses to well defined abstract problems	Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services operations or processes, including resourcing	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge
Competence Context	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non routine activities; transfer and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts	Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts
Competence Role	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for allocation of resources; form, and function within multiple complex and heterogeneous groups	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes

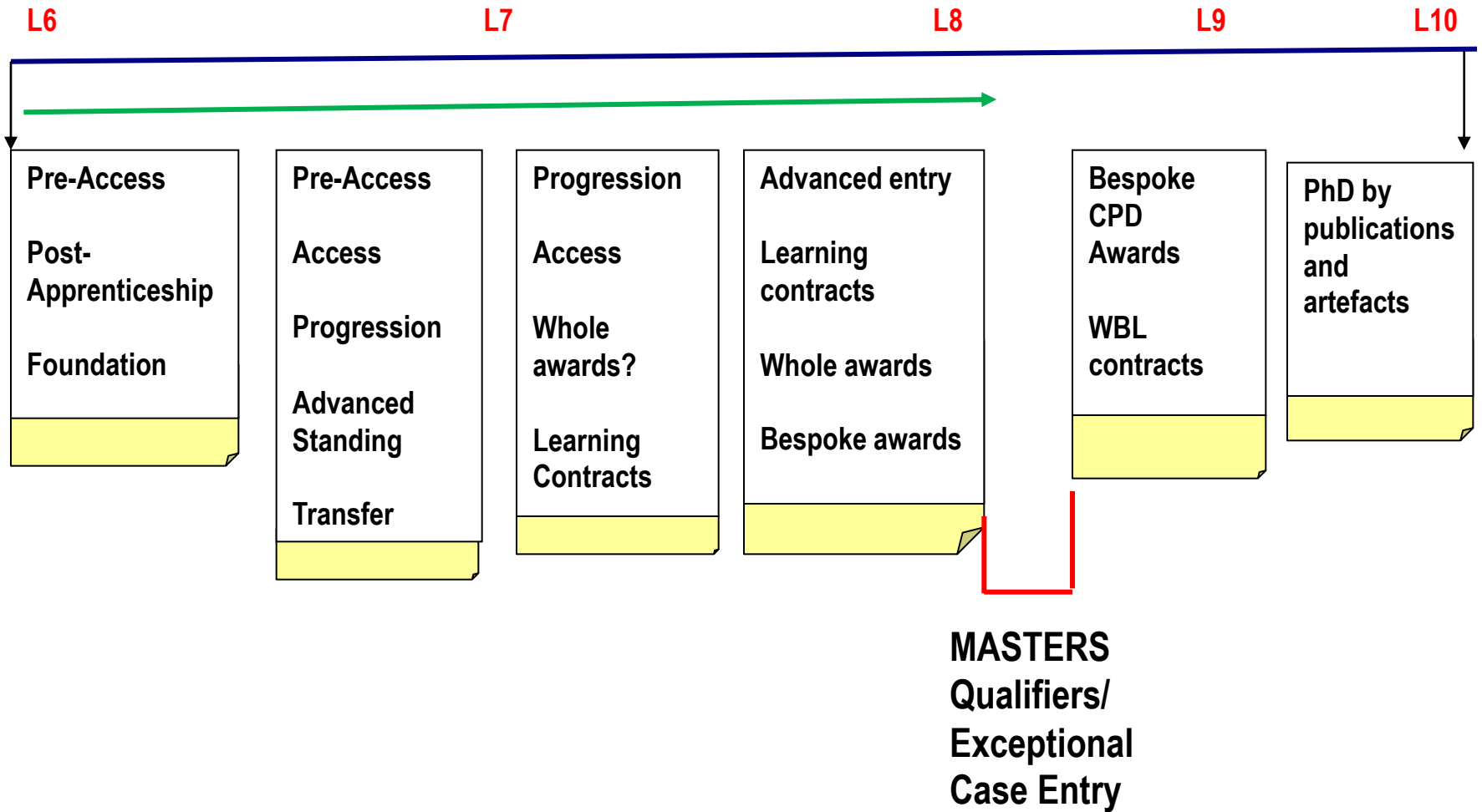
<i>EQF Levels</i>	<i>EHEA Framework (Bologna)</i>	<i>Irish NFQ Levels</i>	<i>Irish NFQ Major Award-types</i>
1		1	Level 1 Certificate
		2	Level 2 Certificate
2		3	Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate
3		4	Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate
4		5	Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate
5	Short Cycle within First Cycle	6	Advanced Certificate (FET award)* Higher Certificate (HET award)
6	First Cycle	7	Ordinary Bachelors Degree
		8	Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma
7	Second Cycle	9	Masters Degree, Post-Graduate Diploma
8	Third Cycle	10	Doctoral Degree, Higher Doctorate

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The diagram includes several arrows indicating relationships between levels:

- A blue arrow points downwards from level 3 to level 6.
- A red arrow points downwards from level 5 to level 9.
- A pink dashed arrow points downwards from level 7 to level 10.
- Blue arrows point downwards from level 7 to 8, 8 to 9, and 9 to 10.

RPL Continuum across Levels in the DIT



Possible RPL Continuum across Levels in a national framework of qualifications

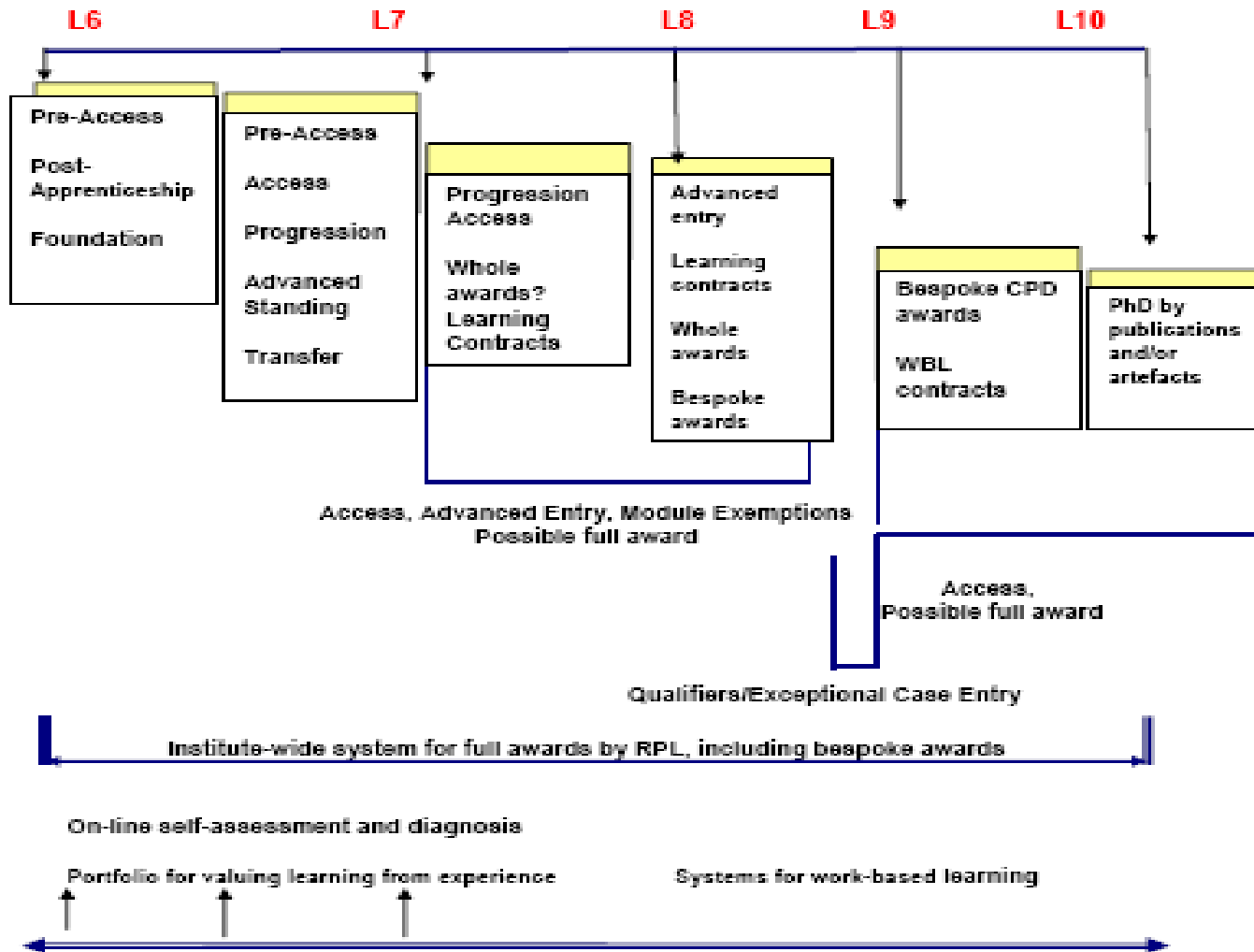
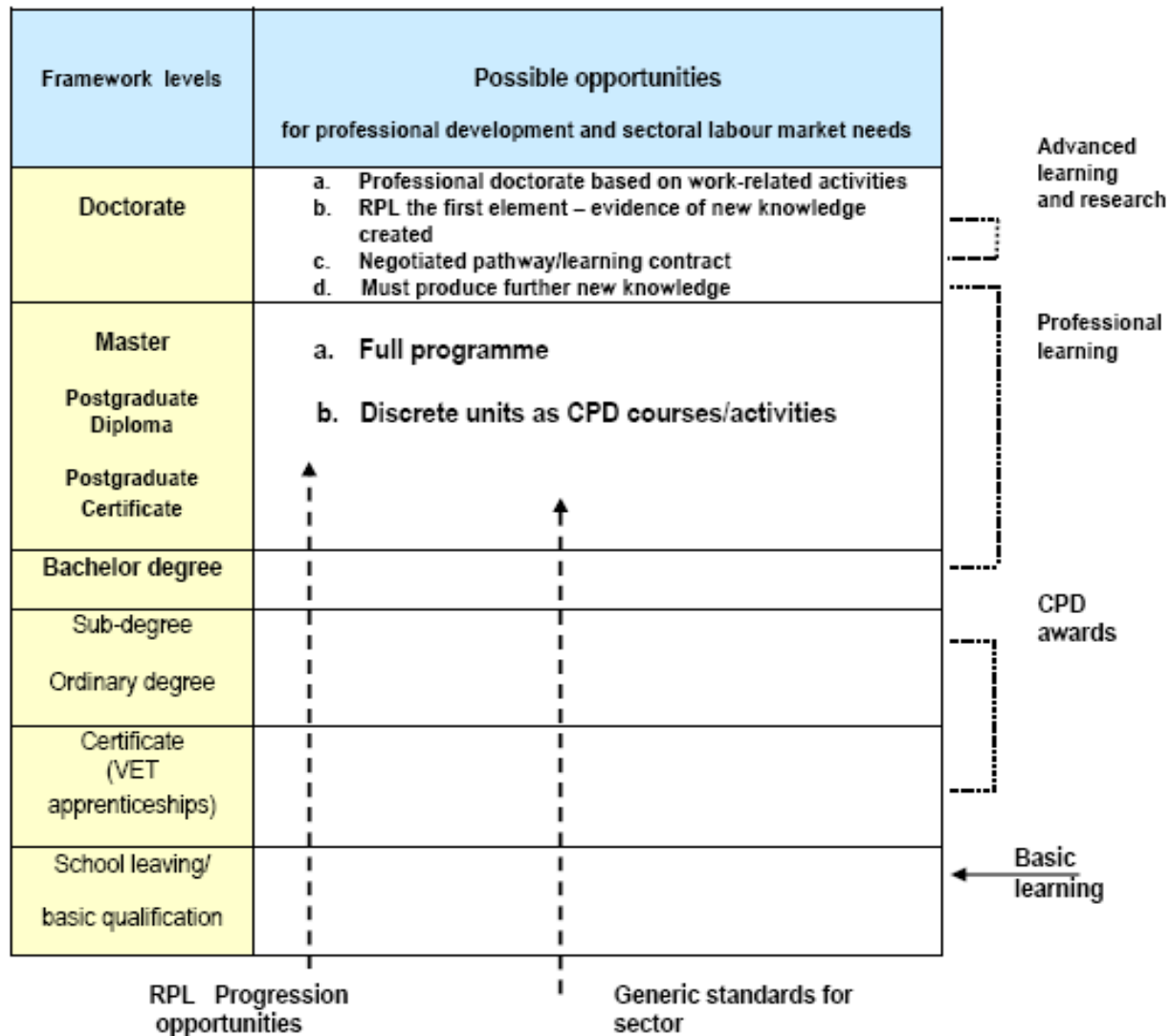


Figure 9: Using RPL for progression in the labour market



6 Success factors for RPL?

1. Trust and confidence among staff
2. Consultation and agreement
3. No risk – good quality assurance
4. Accurate policy and procedures
5. Flexibility to respond to changing situations
6. Clear distinction between **academic** and **operational** matters.

