



Glasgow Caledonian University

Recognising Prior informal Learning in Scotland

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Overview

- The Bigger Picture : National developments, SCQF, QAA and GCU Widening Participation Strategy
- RPL at GCU: Review 2011
- Key elements of new RPL policy and flowcharts of process
- Designing a flexible curriculum
- Process of gaining credit through RPL
- Streamlining and Enhancing RPL processes
- Discussion questions

Higher Education System in Scotland: a changing landscape

- **Role of HE in supporting Scotland's economic growth:** as well as teaching and research university remit extends to knowledge and exchange and widening access
- **Scottish Government/Scottish Funding Council requirements for universities:**
 - to work more closely in partnership with other HEIs and colleges to meet regional economic needs and provide more seamless progression pathways between college-delivered HN qualifications and advanced levels of university degrees (articulation)
 - develop more flexible provision to meet workforce development needs.
 - Widen participation by increasing recruitment and retention of non-traditional learners
- **Funding drivers:** New Horizons funding for widening access, retention and articulation, part-time incentive premium
- **Funding challenges:** reduced resources; increased demand for university places- 'doing more with less'

Higher Education System in Scotland: a changing landscape

White Paper: 'Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering our ambitions for post-16 Education

Reforming post-16 education system

Proposals for legislation include:

- Widening access outcomes agreement and financial penalties
- Use of 'contextualised admissions' to increase student intake from low-achieving schools and derogation of cap on numbers for students from most deprived areas
- Review of number and pattern of colleges and universities: regional coherence
- Articulation; flexible delivery, part-time study; advanced entry
- Change to college/university governance

Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework

12		Doctorate		12
11		Masters	SVQ 5	11
10		Honours Degree		10
9		Ordinary Degree		9
8		HND / HE Diploma	SVQ 4	8
7	Advanced Higher	HNC / HE Certificate		7
6	Higher		SVQ 3	6
5	Intermediate 2		SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1		SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3			3
2	Access 2			2
1	Access 1			1

The diagram illustrates the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework (SCQF) with levels 1 through 12. The framework is structured as follows:

- Level 12:** Doctorate
- Level 11:** Masters
- Level 10:** Honours Degree
- Level 9:** Ordinary Degree
- Level 8:** HND / HE Diploma
- Level 7:** HNC / HE Certificate
- Level 6:** Higher
- Level 5:** Intermediate 2
- Level 4:** Intermediate 1
- Level 3:** Access 3
- Level 2:** Access 2
- Level 1:** Access 1

Progression paths are indicated by red arrows:

- A vertical arrow points upwards from level 4 to level 6.
- A horizontal arrow points from level 5 to level 8.
- A diagonal arrow points from level 8 to level 7.
- A diagonal arrow points from level 7 to level 4.

The SCQF and EQF

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
8	12
7	11
6	10/9
5	8/7
4	6
3	5
2	4
1	3
	2
	1

Different types of prior learning

Formal learning:

- takes place within the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers
- is assessed and credit-rated.

Informal learning:

- achieved through life and work experiences
- learning gained in non-formal contexts e.g. in the community, the workplace or independent learning
- not been previously assessed or credit-rated

RPL is a *learning*, as well as an assessment process

Use of Recognition of Prior informal Learning (RPL) in Scotland

As a result of RPL people may:

- **Plan a learning pathway** which will build on their prior learning
- **Identify core, and other skills**, which they have gained through their life and work experiences which will help them to study, train or work effectively
- **Gain entry** to a programme at college or university as alternative to traditional entry qualifications
- **Gain credit** within a programme or towards a qualification

Use of Recognition of Prior informal Learning (RPL) in Scotland: who can use RPL?

- **Mature students/adult returners**
- **Part-time students**
- **People wanting to change career or enhance existing qualifications**
- **Employees as part of personal or career development**
- **Individuals engaged in community-based activities and learning**
- **People who are unemployed or facing redundancy**
- **Refugees and migrant workers**
- **School students involved in extra-curricular activities**

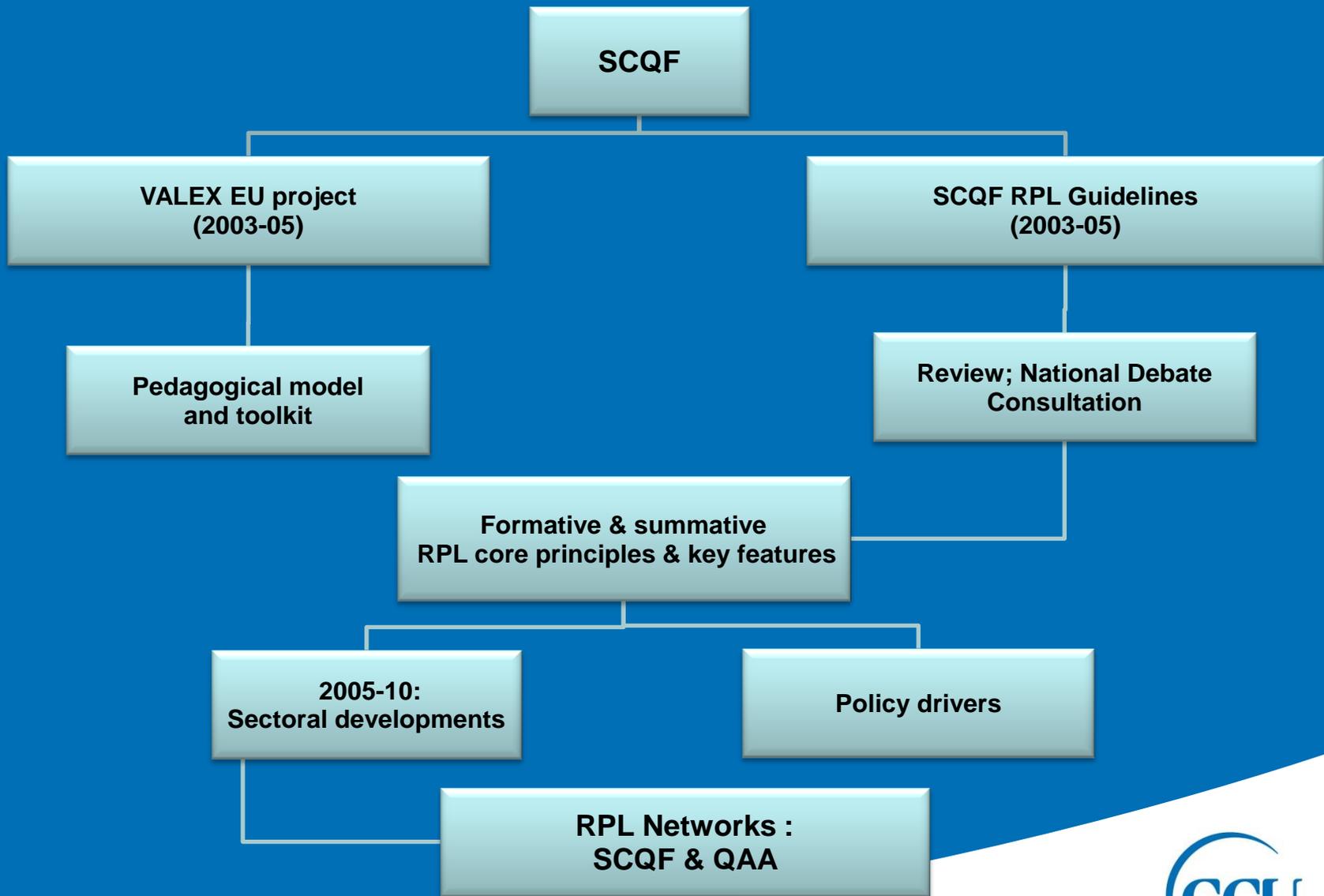
Benefits of RPL and Continuing Challenges

Benefits:

- To the learner
- To the university
- To employers
- At a national level

Continuing challenges...

- Lack of evidence base
- Lack of resources
- Concept & Practice: Parity of esteem & curriculum design
- Basis of recognition: direct match or broad comparison of outcomes/capacities?
- Consistency and transparency
- Transition issues for learners



Supporting RPL development in the University sector in Scotland

- **QAA/Universities Scotland RPL HEI Network**
- **SCQF RPL Network**
- **European RPL Network (Bologna Follow Up Working Group)**
- **Prior Learning International Research Centre (PLIRC)**
- **Link to QAA Work-based Learning Forum**
- **Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Quality Enhancement Theme**

QAA Universities Scotland HEI RPL Network

Purpose:

- Vehicle for **sharing practice and research** in RPL to assist development in Scottish sector
- **Raise awareness** of developments in the rest of the UK, Europe and internationally
- Link into **post-Bologna** developments
- Link into **other RPL developments** via SCQF RPL Network and international research community e.g. PLIRC

Programme of Work 2011-12

- Developing guidelines for streamlining RPL processes
- Researching the effectiveness of RPL from the learner perspective
- Raising the visibility of the network
- Developing and supporting the Curriculum Enhancement Theme

Building a National Framework for RPL in Scotland's Universities

The National Framework initiative has come about to try and address well established barriers to RPL in Scotland. These are:

- Lack of awareness in students and staff
- Inconsistent policies and practices between and within institutions which make it difficult for the following to engage with RPL
 - o Professional bodies
 - o Staff
 - o Students
- Resource intensive or a perception that it is resource intensive

Building a National Framework for RPL in Scotland's Universities

The National Framework will aim to:

- Reduce inconsistencies by attempting to obtain a consensus about RPL policies and procedures across Scottish HEIs
- Make it easier to implement RPL from scratch because the Framework
- Make it easier to develop RPL opportunities and raise the numbers of RPL students in institutions for new areas within HEIs
- Make it easier for students to understand RPL and what the processes entail
- Make it easier to enhance existing RPL provision
- Raise awareness of RPL as a potential admissions and articulation route for HEIs

Building a National Framework for RPL in Scotland's Universities

The Framework will be

- A developmental Framework and not an instrumentalist one
- A Framework developed by the sector using its own expertise and resources to help the sector
- Set firmly in the Scottish context but adaptable enough to reflect institutional contexts
- Not prescriptive but facilitative.

GCU Context : Widening Participation Strategy

GCU's vision: a successful international university delivering access and excellence, with a strong commitment to the common good.

GCU's mission: to provide an outstanding inclusive learning environment underpinned by curiosity driven research.

GCU's Widening Participation (WP) Strategy: recruitment, progression, performance, completion and employability of students who are underrepresented in HE.

The provision of flexible routes into and through programmes at GCU for all learners with the potential to benefit from Higher Education regardless of background

External Drivers: Widening Access and Retention Premium; Part-time incentive premium; workforce development agenda

Challenges: increased applications by well-qualified school leavers; significant reductions in teaching funding; and the need to develop other income streams to ensure sustainability

Reviewing GCU's RPL system

Why?

- New Widening Participation Strategy
- Institutional and sector developments

How?

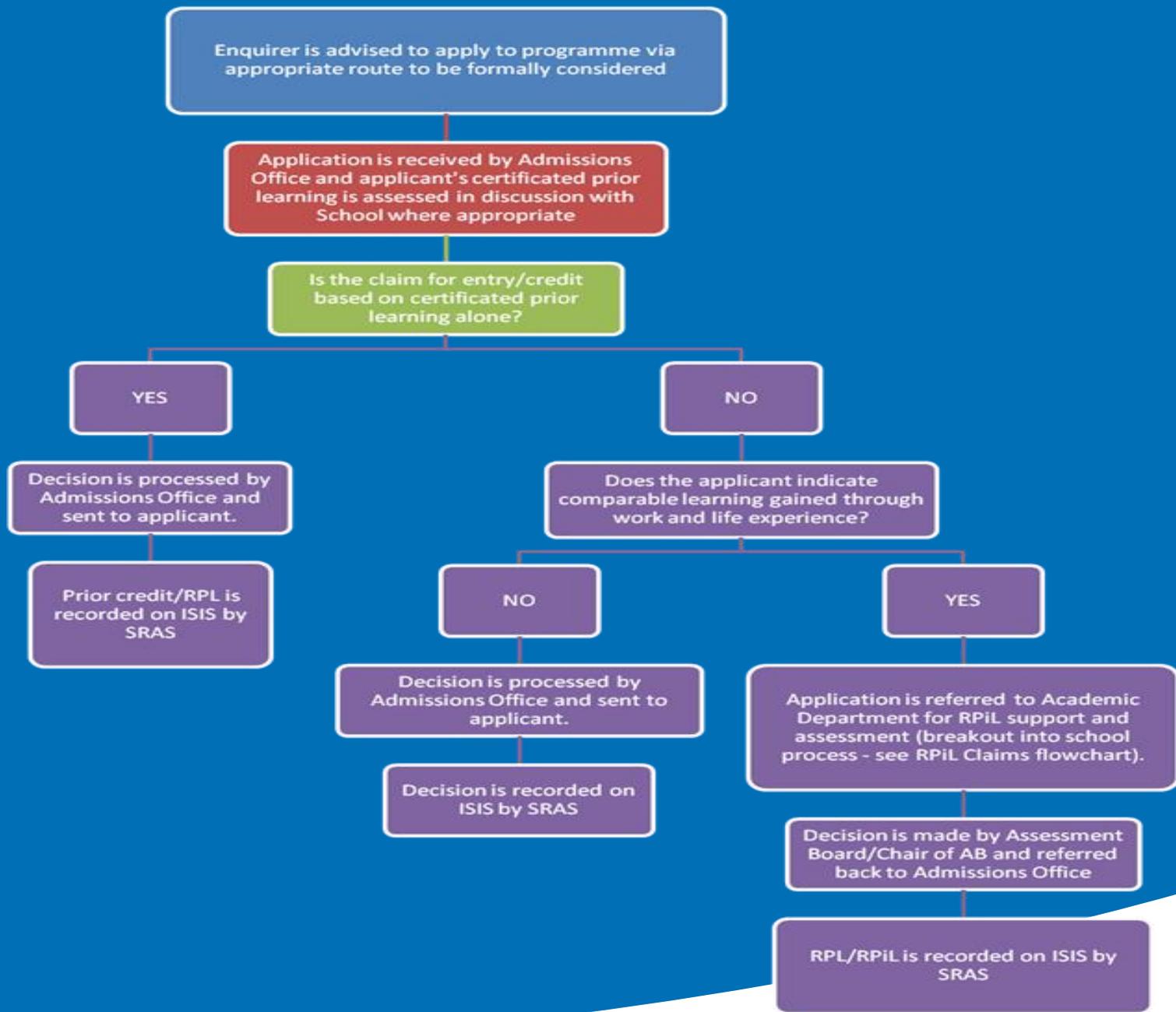
- Flexible Entry Review Working Group

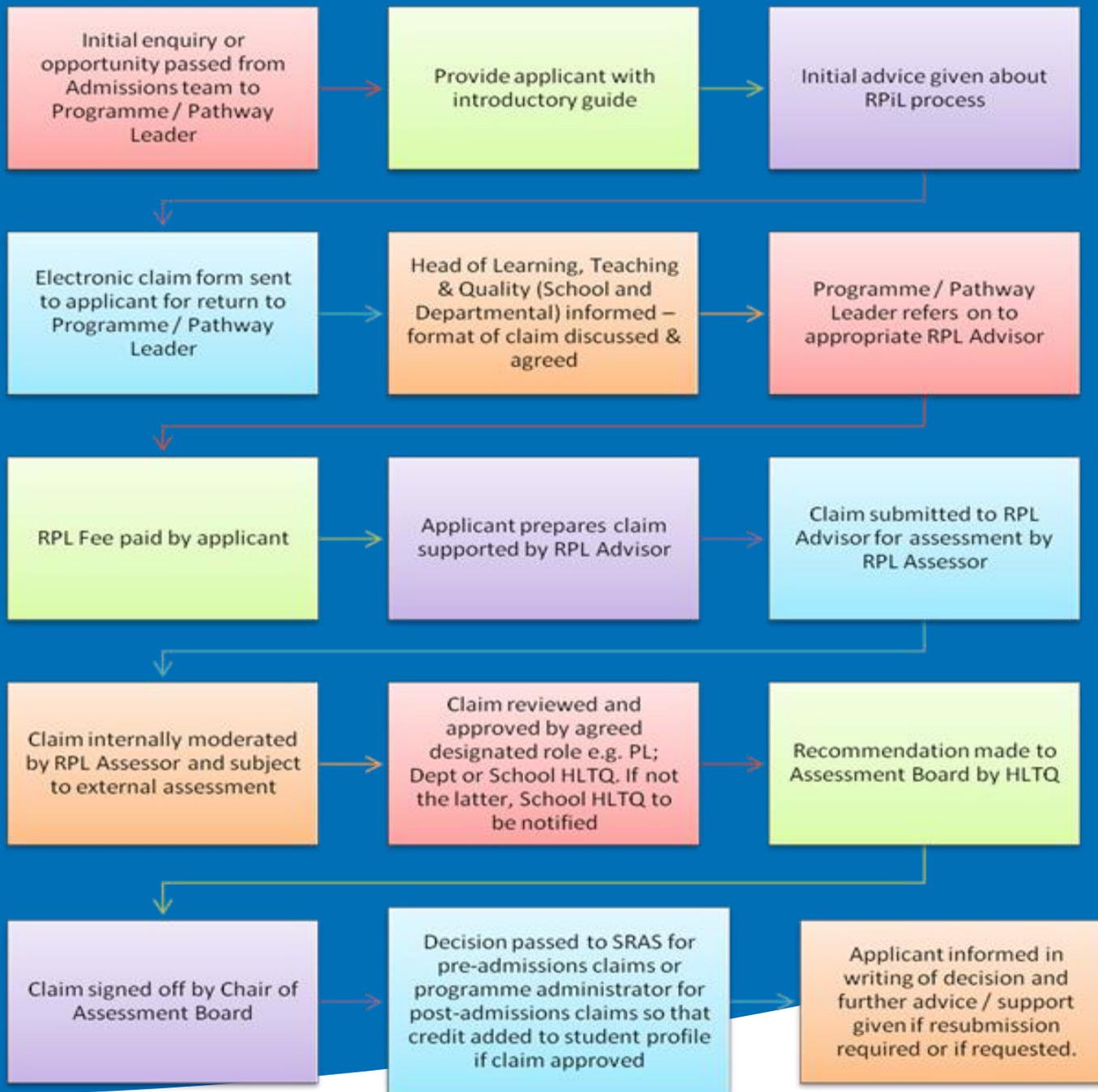
Outcomes

- Revised policy; recommendations for further exploration/development , including piloting use of new technology/VLE to streamline process

New RPL Policy

- Commitment to recognising all learning
- Embedded in Quality Assurance system
- Definitions and use of RPL at GCU
- RPL process at GCU
- Roles and responsibilities
- Support process for learners
- RPL as part of the overall assessment strategy
- Credit limits and fees for RPL
- Support and guidance for staff
- Monitoring and review processes





Designing a flexible curriculum

Learning outcomes: enablers and barriers?

Flexible entry routes addressed at the point of programme design rather than programme delivery.

Programme design should also allow for the myriad competencies and knowledge which students bring to the academic curriculum.

Design of learning outcomes should facilitate a range of different routes for their achievement which link into delivery and assessment methods.

Integration of RPL within Work-based Learning Programmes

Process of gaining recognition for prior learning

3 stages to process of gaining recognition for prior learning:

1. Initial advice and guidance
2. Support
3. Recognition: assessment and award of entry to or credit within programme or qualification at GCU

Key principles of RPL:

- Recognition is given for learning not experience
- Learning that is recognised should be transferable
- Learner responsibility
- RPL credit of equal value

Streamlining RPL Support and Assessment processes

To support the Scottish HEI RPL Network in the development of guidelines for the streamlining of RPL support and assessment for the HE sector

Timescale CRLI commissioned by QAA to undertake the project between April and July 2011

3 Phases

1. On-line scoping study
2. Web-based survey
3. Follow up telephone interviews

Outcomes

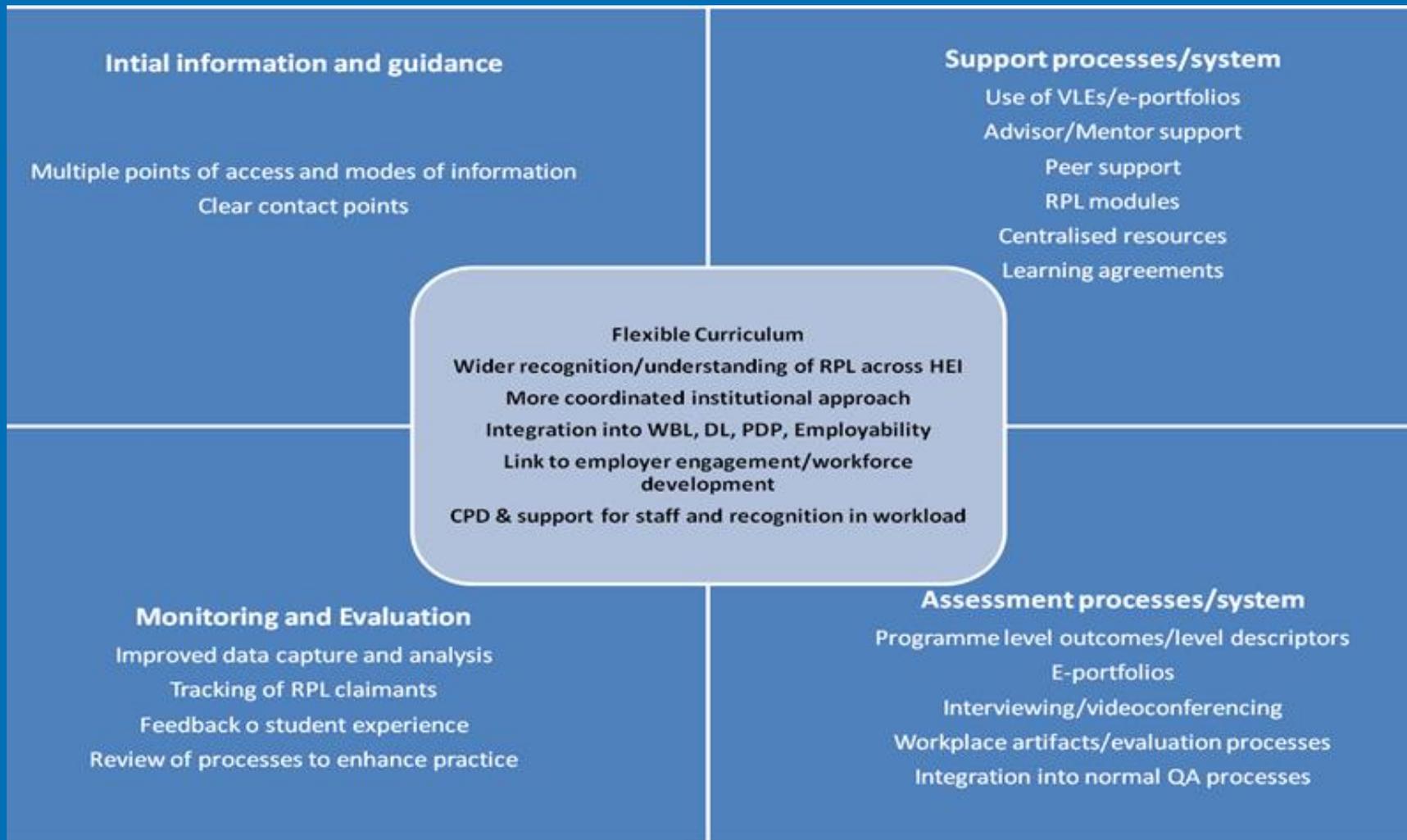
- Scoping study (separate resource)
- Recommendations for HEIs: key areas of development and institutional enablers
- Typology to support development of guidelines

Institutional Enablers of RPL

Streamlining and enhancing RPL support and assessment require a set of institutional enablers related to:

- Policy and process that mainstreams and integrates RPL within admissions, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and quality assurance mechanisms;
- Curriculum design that explicitly addresses flexible modes of entry, progression and delivery;
- Clear points of contact for RPL for potential applicants, existing students and staff;
- Building staff capacity and capability, linked to the need for CPD opportunities and the increased visibility of RPL across the institution and in staff workload;
- Greater use of technology-enhanced RPL provision through VLEs and e-portfolios as part of a blended learning approach
- Integration of RPL processes within related developments such as PDP, WBL and distance learning; and
- Data gathering and analysis to ensure effective monitoring, tracking and evaluation as part of a process of reviewing and enhancing practice

Developing national guidelines/framework for HE



Activity

To what extent are the institutional enablers in place within your institution?

Activity- discussion

What potential is there for greater use of RPL within your institution?

E.g. :

- Alternative pathways to Undergraduate Programmes
- Alternative pathways to Postgraduate Programmes
- Accelerated progress through Programmes
- Accreditation of CPD provision
- Work Based Learning
- More flexible accredited provision
- Part-time provision
- Flexible provision, i.e. blended learning
- OTHER