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Leaders in business, higher education, and policy-makers come together for the first time to explore the role of the ‘recognition of prior learning’ in addressing skills needs and developing talent

New online resource for learners and business now live at [www.priorlearning.ie](http://www.priorlearning.ie)

Leaders and policy-makers in higher education and enterprise came together today, Thursday 2 March, for the first time to explore the role of ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ (RPL) in upskilling, reskilling, and retaining key members of the workforce.

With RPL, a learner can get recognition from a higher education institution for the prior learning they have done in work, life and the community which in turn can provide a pathway to and through higher education. Using RPL, a higher education institution gives recognition for what someone already knows, understands and can do prior to, for example, starting on a programme or module. This eliminates the duplication of learning, meaning that they don’t have to relearn things they already know.

A dedicated online resource for learners, businesses, and higher education institutions was launched today at [www.priorlearning.ie](http://www.priorlearning.ie). This website is a jumping-off point for anyone seeking to engage with RPL as a route in to higher education and will provide businesses and enterprise with an understanding of how RPL can benefit workers.

“Recognition of Prior Learning has been with us on an ad hoc basis for many years”, according to Grace Edge, National Co-ordinator of the RPL in Higher Education project. “Over the course of this five-year project, fourteen higher education institutions are working together with employers and stakeholders to embed RPL in our policies and practices and promote it to a diverse audience”.

“Today is all about bringing higher education leaders and policy-makers together with enterprise to explore how we can use RPL to increase access to higher education programmes and progression opportunities to meet current skills needs. We want to be able to enhance our ability to work with businesses collaboratively to create professional development opportunities for staff, develop useful tools, resources, and materials to enable that, and to help them retain and build on their workforce’s existing knowledge and skills.”

“This is a wonderful opportunity to build on and expand engagement between business and enterprise and higher education institutions” stated Professor Veronica Campbell, President of South East Technological University (SETU). “RPL is about recognising learning, regardless of where or how it was acquired and we know that the workplace is a valuable and rich site of learning. RPL is for everyone – those with high qualifications, low qualifications and no qualifications. The benefits that it can bring to both employers and employees are significant. For employers, RPL can be a fantastic tool which helps nurture and retain employees. For higher education institutions, RPL creates agility in our system, helping us to value the learning achieved outside formal education and develop programmes sensitive to employee’s existing skillsets”.

Claire McGee, Head of Education and Innovation Policy at Ibec agrees. “Staff hiring and retention is a huge issue for employers. In the ‘war for talent’, RPL can help employers to develop from within and retain employees through contributing to career progression, whilst also boosting employee motivation, confidence and self-esteem.

“This is a pivotal time for business in Ireland as we deal with the twin transitions of climate change and digitalisation, amplified by shifting demographics, global migration and displacement, and the fallout from Covid and Brexit. It is therefore critical that we build resilient and empowered communities and workplaces which not only survive but thrive in this context of continued change and uncertainty. For that, we need people from all walks of life to engage more frequently in higher education and having their prior learning recognised means they can build on what they already know, without having to ‘start from scratch’. Today we heard great examples where RPL helped employees and enterprise save time and money in obtaining qualifications. When RPL is done at scale, with cohorts of employees, we see real potential to address skills needs more effectively and efficiently. The learning from today clearly demonstrates that RPL is not a ‘nice-to-have’ or ‘optional extra’, rather an essential component of an accessible, flexible and responsive higher education system.”

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## Notes to Editors

The National Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Higher Education Project is a collaborative initiative working to embed and expand RPL across 14 partner higher education institutions. The project is funded by the Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3 (Innovation and Agility) and co-sponsored by the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) and the Irish Universities Association (IUA). Participating institutions include:

- ATU Atlantic Technological University <https://www.atu.ie/recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl>
- DCU Dublin City University <https://www.dcu.ie/policies/recognition-prior-learning-policy-dcu>
- IADT Institute of Art Des and Technology Dun Laoghaire <https://iadt.ie/study/how-to-apply/recognition-of-prior-learning/>
- DkIT Dundalk Institute of Technology [https://www.dkit.ie/admissions/how-to-apply/recognition-of-prior-learning-\(rpl\)/](https://www.dkit.ie/admissions/how-to-apply/recognition-of-prior-learning-(rpl)/)
- MU Maynooth University <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/rpl>
- MTU Munster Technological University <https://www.mtu.ie/admissions/how-to-apply/recognition-of-prior-learning/>
- SETU South East Technological University (Waterford) <https://www.wit.ie/recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl>
- SETU South East Technological University (Carlow) <https://www.itcarlow.ie/study/admissionssupport/recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl.htm>
- TU Dublin Technological University Dublin <https://www.tudublin.ie/study/part-time/how-to-apply/recognition-of-prior-learning/>
- TUS Technological University of the Shannon <https://tus.ie/study-with-us/rpl/>
- TCD Trinity College Dublin [www.TCD.ie](http://www.TCD.ie)
- UCC University College Cork <https://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/recognitionofpriorlearning/>
- UCD University College Dublin <https://www.ucd.ie/rpl/>
- UG University of Galway <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/adult-learning/recognition-of-prior-learning/>
- UL University of Limerick <https://www.ul.ie/priorlearning>