

Recognition of Prior Learning for Individuals and Organisations
Andy Gibbs
June 2013

Session Outline

1. Introduction
2. RPL – What do we mean?
3. Brief review of European Higher Education Reforms
4. RPL – an overview
5. RPL – the process

The SCQF

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

scqf

scottish credit and
qualifications framework

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12				DOCTORAL DEGREE	
11				INTEGRATED MASTERS DEGREE / MASTERS DEGREE POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ5
10				HONOURS DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	
9			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD	BACHELORS / ORDINARY DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ4
8		HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA		DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION	
7	ADVANCED HIGHER SCOTTISH BACCALAUREATE	HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE		CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION	SVQ3
6	HIGHER				
5	INTERMEDIATE 2 CREDIT STANDARD GRADE				SVQ2
4	INTERMEDIATE 1 GENERAL STANDARD GRADE	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE	NATIONAL PROGRESSION AWARD		SVQ1
3	ACCESS 3 FOUNDATION STANDARD GRADE				
2	ACCESS 2				
1	ACCESS 1				

What We Mean by “Recognition of Prior Learning” (RPL)



- The process of RPL can give individuals an opportunity to get recognition for all prior informal and non-formal learning that has not been assessed or credit rated.
- progress their personal/career development;
- gain entry to a qualification or learning programme by showing that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding if they do not have the required formal entry qualifications;
- gain Specific Credit Transfer towards a qualification or learning programme to shorten the normal period of study;
- be awarded SCQF General Credit Points at a specified SCQF Level which recognises the learning achievement and may be used to progress their learning by meeting entry requirements for a qualification or learning programme.

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 has not been previously assessed or credit-rated



Recognition is not given for the experience itself, but for what has been learned from the experience.

the essential elements of an RPL

process

- The RPL process must be learner centred
- Learners must be offered clear guidance about RPL
- Learners seeking credit by RPL must provide evidence of their learning
- Learners must be supported to present evidence of their learning
- The credit which learners achieve by RPL has exactly the same value as credit achieved from completing an assessed learning programme.

An RPL claim must include:

- clear statements about what was actually learned; and
- supporting evidence that the learning being claimed has been achieved.

Four Principles

- learner-focused;
- accessible;
- flexible;
- quality-assured.

What do we mean by RPL ?

- **Recognition of Prior informal Learning (RPL)** will involve a learner in :
 - reflecting on life and work experiences and non-formal learning or training experiences
 - identifying learning outcomes
 - providing evidence of that learning
- Role of learning provider to provide effective support and manage process of recognition

What do we mean by RPL ?

- The SCQF guidelines encourages the use of **RPL for personal and career development**, or formative recognition, and **RPL for credit**, or summative recognition.

- **Formative recognition** is linked to personal/career development & educational guidance.

Purpose: to build learner confidence and help learners make connections between previous learning and ways in they which can build on this to support further learning and development

What do we mean by RPL ?

- **RPL for credit**, or **summative recognition**, involves assessing, and then credit rating learning gained through experience which took place before a learner embarks on a formal programme or qualification
- **Link between two forms of RPL** : Formative recognition can be preparatory stage to summative recognition (building learner confidence and developing reflective skills e.g. use of profiling tools)

What do we mean by RPL?

- **RPL for credit :context**
- Organisations which deliver **SCQF credit-rated** provision:
 - Colleges
 - Higher Education Institutions
 - SQA-approved centres
 - Other SCQF credit-rating bodies
- All organisations which deliver SCQF credit-rated provision can award a **general credit-rating**. The receiving institution determines the amount of **specific credit** a learner can be awarded within a particular programme within that institution or organisation

What are the outcomes of RPL ?

- **As a result of RPL people may:**
 - **Plan a learning pathway;** personal/career development plan which will build on their prior learning (RPL for PCD/ formative recognition)
 - **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 (building learner confidence & supporting transitions)
 - **Gain entry** to a programme at college or university as alternative to traditional entry qualifications (RPL for entry)
 - **Gain credit** within a programme or towards a qualification (RPL for credit/ summative recognition)
 - See RPL: Learner Journey diagram

Who may benefit from RPL?

- people who have been out of the education system for a long time and/or who may lack formal qualifications and/or confidence as learners
- adults returning to education
- unemployed people looking for a way to demonstrate their learning to prospective employers
- people wanting to improve upon existing qualifications
- school students who have been involved in extra-curricular activities
- those wanting to re-train or change careers
- students at colleges, higher education institutions (HEIs) and other learning and training providers
- people who have taken non-formal learning or training in the workplace or through community-based learning
- people who have gained a range of skills and knowledge through volunteering or through activities or projects within their community

Who May Benefit from RPL?

- enable greater retention of learners
- widen access to a range of learners
- increase participation of learners from non- traditional learning backgrounds.
- helping to identify employees' skills effectively
- helping to identify skills gaps in organisations
- helping to identify appropriate training opportunities
- reducing the time required in employee training due to minimised duplication of learning
- increasing motivation and interest in workplace activities on the part of the employee/learner

Drivers for RPL development in Scotland

- National level:
 - Lifelong Learning, Employability agendas, Skills Strategy for Scotland
 - Social inclusion and social justice
 - Skilled, flexible & mobile workforce
 - Improved economic productivity and competitiveness
 - Legislation in some sectors regarding qualified workforce
- Learning provider:
 - Widening participation and Flexible Delivery agendas:
 - Demographic change- need to target new student markets
 - Student retention and progression

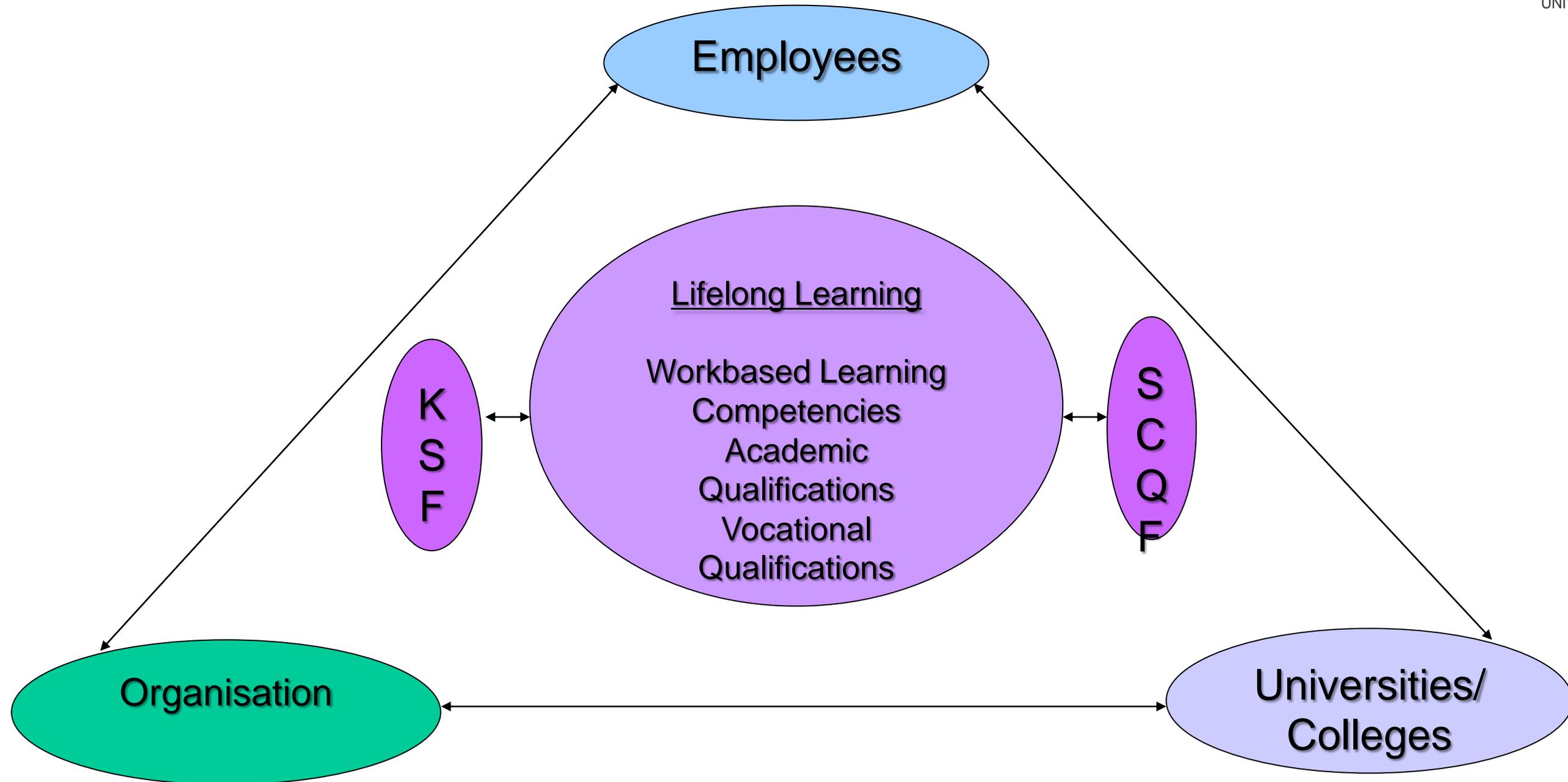
What are the challenges of RPL?

- Achieving consistency in recognition and valuing of prior learning.
- Ensuring RPL is a developmental experience
- How can the ‘made to measure’ aspiration of RPL fit with university policy and processes that are designed to manage large cohorts of students studying and learning in similar ways?
- How can RPL combine flexibility and accessibility with rigour of quality assurance?
- How can the RPL process be described in a way that is easy for students to understand yet fully expresses the demands and learning outcomes of an academic programme?

Learning outcomes-based approach

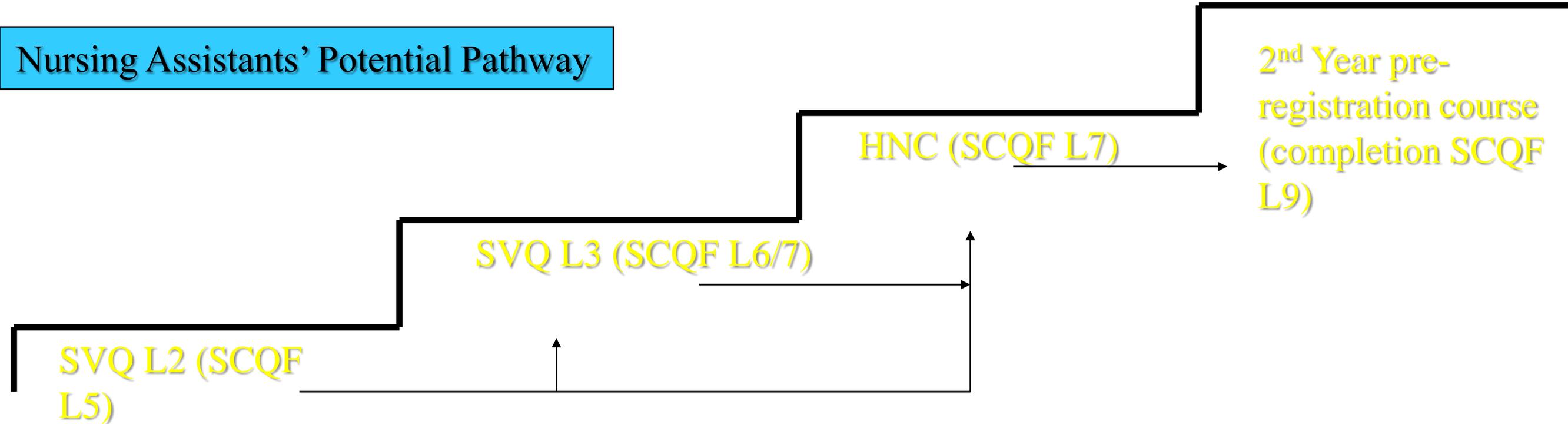
RPL & credit transfer within context of SCQF:

- **Single unified framework** for all Scottish academic and vocational qualifications
- **Outcomes-based** : skills, knowledge & understanding
- **Levels**: complexity of learning (SCQF level descriptors)
- **Credit points** : volume of learning undertaken (average/notional learning time: i.e. 10 hours = 1credit point)
- **SCQF level descriptors** ‘set out characteristic generic outcomes of each level’ relating to knowledge & understanding; practice; generic cognitive skills; communication, ICT & numeracy skills; autonomy, accountability & working with others - ‘provide general shared understanding of each level’ and to allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning at different levels’ (SCQF, 2003) –**facilitate recognition of prior learning and vertical and horizontal progression routes**



Three-way partnership

Nursing Assistants' Potential Pathway



KSF outline—
informs education
and training
requirements

Education and
training aligned to
SCQF level
descriptors

Achievement of
learning outcomes
result in: academic
accreditation and /or
portfolio of
competency

Transferability
through RPL and
achievement of
KSF outline

There are two main uses of RPL for credit.

1. Applicants to a degree programme may be able to undertake RPL to seek entry to a degree at Napier University if they do not have the normal entry requirements but can demonstrate that they have achieved the necessary prerequisite skills and knowledge through learning from prior experience (eg from the workplace) to succeed and benefit.

2. Students may be able to use RPL to gain academic credit within a degree programme at Napier University. Credit can be gained for module(s) within a degree, or indeed for entire level(s) of a degree, enabling students to enter the programme with 'advanced standing'. Credit may also be claimed within a programme once students have started on their degree programme

Process of gaining credit for prior learning

Key principles of RPL:

- Recognition is given for **learning** not experience
- Learning that is recognised should be **transferable** and not just context-specific
- **Learner** is responsible for identifying & demonstrating their learning
- Credit awarded through RPL is of **same value** as credit gained through informal learning