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# Country report

# UK- Wales

2016 update to the European inventory  
on validation of non-formal and informal learning

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## Introductory note

The Welsh Government is part of a devolved system of governance in the UK for education, lifelong learning and all aspects of the skills agenda. Each of the devolved administrations has its own strategy for skills and lifelong learning. For this reason, separate reports have been prepared to cover England and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This report describes the national activities/structures in place, which are specific to Wales. Where the same structures apply as in England and Northern Ireland, a brief indication is given here – further detail can be found in the report for England and Northern Ireland.

# 1 Introduction and Evaluation

## 1.1 Abstract

Non-formal learning can be recognised in a number of ways in Wales<sup>1</sup>. Firstly, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is possible for *individuals* by way of using their previously acquired learning to obtain or access formal qualifications on the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), including higher education and vocational qualifications. Secondly, the Quality Assured Lifelong Learning (QALL) pillar of the CQFW is intended to recognise non-formal learning *provision* as a unit on the CQFW. Thirdly, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) represent an opportunity to validate workplace learning. They are aimed mainly at people in work and lead to a nationally-recognised qualification, proving the ability to perform an occupation to a nationally-recognised occupational standard.

Two notable developments can be identified in the period 2014-2016. Firstly, there have been a number of changes in relation to the QALL pillar of the CQFW, which is now 'owned' by the sector and no longer includes informal learning. Secondly, the RPL Wales project was delivered in the higher education sector, bringing together a consortium of higher education providers in south-east Wales to improve their RPL procedures.

The CQFW represents a potential enabler for validation in Wales. One of its main impacts identified by stakeholders is greater recognition of prior and non-formal learning through the QALL pillar, with particular benefits for disadvantaged learner groups, helping to raise aspirations and promote progression opportunities. Stakeholders identified the flexibility created by the CQFW as a benefit and, through RPL, the Framework is said to have helped employers and employees to avoid duplication of training. Nevertheless, there is no national strategy relating specifically to validation of non-formal learning in Wales. A key weakness is that although RPL may be recognised 'on paper' by learning providers, in the form of RPL policies, actual implementation by providers and awareness amongst learners appears to be very low.

## 1.2 Main changes since the 2014 update

Non-formal learning can be recognised in a number of ways in Wales<sup>2</sup>. Firstly, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is possible for *individuals* by way of using their previously acquired learning to obtain or access formal qualifications on the CQFW, including higher education (HE) and vocational qualifications. Notably, access to higher education courses include opportunities for recognition of prior learning. Secondly, the Quality Assured Lifelong Learning (QALL) pillar of the CQFW is intended to recognise non-formal learning *provision* as a unit on the CQFW. Thirdly, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) represent an opportunity to validate workplace learning.

Two notable developments can be identified in the period 2014-2016. Firstly, there have been a number of changes in relation to the QALL pillar of the CQFW, which is now 'owned' by the sector and no longer includes informal learning. Secondly, a project – 'RPL Wales' – took place in the HE sector, bringing together a consortium of HE providers in south-east Wales, to improve their RPL procedures.

Opportunities for RPL are developed from a sectoral perspective, with different approaches for VET, HE and adult learning. A bottom-up approach is taken, in the sense that awarding organisations and learning providers develop their own policies (and practices in the case of

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<sup>1</sup> This report focuses on validation of non-formal learning, as informal learning is no longer included within the scope of the CQFW.

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providers) for RPL. Furthermore, the QALL pillar of the CQFW is now also 'owned' by the sector. However, although there are opportunities to have non-formal learning recognised in Wales, there is no national strategy relating specifically to validation of non-formal and informal learning.

There are no systems to coordinate validation across the different sectors of learning in Wales. No sectors are given priority. The question of trust with regards to the outcomes of RPL is not really an issue, since the outcomes (access, award of credits/qualifications) are not usually different to those acquired by learners who have pursued a formal route (except in the case of Agored Cymru qualifications, where certificates and/or credit transcripts awarded by Agored Cymru identify RPL credits specifically). The QALL pillar of the CQFW does however serve to increase trust in and recognition of non-formal learning provision, which is acknowledged through this pillar.

The CQFW represents a potential enabler for validation in Wales. One of its main impacts identified by stakeholders is greater recognition of prior learning through the QALL pillar, with particular benefits for disadvantaged learner groups, helping to raise aspirations and promote progression opportunities. Stakeholders identified the flexibility created by the CQFW as a benefit and, through RPL, the Framework is said to have helped employers and employees to avoid duplication of training.

Nevertheless, in Wales, as in the other countries of the UK, use of RPL remains at the discretion of individual providers. Data is not collected at national level, except in the HE sector, where data is only collected in relation to RPL provision ('APEL modules') and not in relation to access facilitated via RPL. Aside from this, evidence of the use of RPL can only be found in relation to individual examples of initiatives, such as those put forward in this report.

According to stakeholders interviewed in 2014 and 2016, some potential obstacles to further development include the lack of strategic drive to promote RPL at national level, a lack of awareness amongst learners of RPL opportunities, a certain lack of expertise among providers, or a lack of confidence to carry out RPL or trust in RPL processes (in the HE sector). Furthermore, a review of the CQFW also found that strategic stakeholders perceived that employers and most learners had a low level of engagement with the CQFW. These stakeholders also did not consider the CQFW to be a driver for policy in Wales and thus believed that there is a need to increase awareness of, and buy-in to, the CQFW across the education and employment sectors (Arad Research Ltd, 2014). It is also possible that the lack of dedicated funding for RPL (except in the HE sector) is a disincentive to what can be perceived as a process that is difficult to administer and time-consuming (for both the individual applicants and the providers). In relation to non-formal provision, Agored Cymru is in the early stages of working on ways to break down barriers to utilising/incorporating RPL, as to date it has not found a successful mechanism to up-skill tutors or reduce costs.

Whilst RPL is possible 'on paper', it is not clear how much it is actually offered and taken up in practice – it appears that implementation is in fact very low. In the HE sector for instance, the RPL Wales project found that although there is good practice in some (departments of) universities, this remains limited. A more uniform approach which can be applied across all qualifications and situations is called for in the progress report for the RPL Wales project, to help to ensure that the Welsh workforce is able to face the changes taking place in the country's labour market (Treadwell, 2014).

Currently, the Welsh Refugee Council does not provide opportunities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning of refugees. However, it does offer other types of support to refugees relating to skills and employment.

## 2 National perspective

### 2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Wales does not have a national policy, strategy or law dedicated specifically to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Different types of validation are possible, as described below in section 2.2.

### 2.2 Validation in education and training

The CQFW provides a mechanism for the recognition of non-formal learning in Wales, through its 'Quality Assured Lifelong Learning' (QALL) pillar.

Alongside the opportunity offered by QALL to recognise non-formal learning provision, learners in Wales can also make use of the other validation routes available in the UK:

- **RPL (relating to regulated qualifications):** The CQFW allows for regulated qualifications to be obtained, in full or in part, via recognition of prior learning (RPL). 'Qualifications Wales' is the regulator for qualifications in Wales and refers to RPL in its interim standard conditions of recognition (see Section 3 for more detail).
- **RPL in the HE Sector:** The responsibility for the implementation of RPL lies with the individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), in line with the autonomous nature of this sector, where HEIs are responsible for admissions and assessment, as well as the quality and standards of their awards. Although there is no legislation that regulates RPL, there is a long tradition of recognition of prior learning and encouraging mature students to participate in higher education. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) issued a circular in 2010 outlining the circumstances in which funding can be provided for RPL in HE in Wales, and providing good practice guidelines for institutions to consider in implementing and promoting APEL – this remains the most recent RPL document relating specifically to HE in Wales. Furthermore, the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which sets out the 'expectations' that all providers of UK HE are required to meet, includes explicit references to RPL and its implementation in relation to both admissions and assessment (see the country report for England and Northern Ireland for more detail). A new project that has taken place in the HE sector since 2014 is 'RPL Wales'<sup>3</sup>, which is a collaborative project between four universities in the South East of Wales (Cardiff Metropolitan University, University of South Wales, Cardiff University and the Open University in Wales). The aim of the project is to offer an RPL service to individuals interested in gaining access or furthering their education through flexible accreditation and study opportunities.
- **Access to HE courses:** These prepare adult learners without traditional qualifications for study at university. Applicants to Access courses come from a variety of backgrounds, and the colleges concerned may assess their potential to enter the Access course taking into account their prior learning and experience. The Access to HE Diploma is a regulated qualification, regulated by QAA. Up to 50 % of the qualification can be gained by RPL. (See the country report for England and Northern Ireland for more detail).
- **NVQs** represent an opportunity to validate workplace learning. They are discussed in more detail under Section 2.3, 'Validation and the Labour Market'.

It cannot be said that certain sectors are given priority in Wales. The RPL Wales project, described in the box below, seems to have been a positive development in the HE sector, but this has now come to a close.

## Box 1 RPL Wales

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Wales project brought together a consortium of HE institutions to promote a model of work-based learning and education development, delivery, support and assessment. The project was led by Cardiff Metropolitan University and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). The University of South Wales and Cardiff University were partners in the project and the Open University was also engaged during the project activities.

The main aim of the project was to increase the number of non-traditional learners entering HE institutions in the South East of Wales as part-time students of work-based learning opportunities. The idea was to look at creating 'one approach' to RPL for the area, in order that adult learners could have more transparency on the opportunities available to them, since there is a low level of awareness of RPL as an alternative route to HE. The project set out to achieve this aim by improving the provision of opportunities to gain university credit through the recognition of work-based and experiential learning. Notably, the project endeavoured to build greater understanding and utilisation of RPL by academic and support staff and students as 'end-users.' Setting up a community of best practice was a central element of the project.

Outcomes achieved through the project included for example:

- RPL guidelines for the project partners;
- general RPL training and staff development for over 100 academic and administrative staff, specific RPL training and development for a small number of RPL assessors linked to advisory, mentoring, and assessment roles and activities, and two RPL workshops for regional Further Education (FE) Colleges;
- an RPL project Moodle site;
- revised academic handbook procedures and systems for RPL, bringing about the integration of RPL into individual HEI admissions systems; and,
- generation of 60 new work-based learning RPL applicants by the end of 2014 with the potential to reach 200 new RPL applicants by the end of 2015.

Importantly, the project increased awareness of RPL in the partner institutions, whereas previously it was a very small-scale activity, carried out in 'pockets' within each university. There was also mistrust amongst academics within the institutions of RPL and the project enabled the partners to increase this trust, by developing a more robust assessment process for RPL

A number of important 'enabling factors' were identified by the project team that helped enhance RPL support and assessment processes in their partner universities. A number of these are now in place but there remain key areas for consolidation or development, the most important of which are related to:

- the use of technology to inform potential RPL students, RPL sponsors and internal staff;
- development of RPL Fellows;
- staff CPD and support which builds individual competencies, and RPL visibility/presence; and,
- the development of RPL monitoring and evaluation processes.

*Excerpted from Treadwell, 2014*

With regards to the four stages of validation, the focus of QALL is to acknowledge learning provision that falls outside of the HE and regulated qualifications pillars. The four stages do not really apply to this procedure, which is about recognising the learning provision rather than validating an individual's learning.

In relation to the regulated qualifications on the CQFW, RPL is understood to involve six stages (Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2015b):

1. Information, advice and guidance about credit,
2. Pre-assessment gathering evidence and giving information,
3. Assessment and documentation of evidence,

4. Feedback,
5. Awarding credit,
6. Appeal.

With regards to Open Educational Resources (OER), many types of employers use this type of provision, but unless it is credit/levelled and certificated, it will not result in a formal qualification. For instance, the Welsh Government offers e-learning provision to its staff, some of which can be logged into a central record. However, these e-learning opportunities are not automatically certificated.

An interesting development is the recent consultation carried out by the Youth Justice Board on the development of a Youth Justice National Qualification Framework (YJNQF). The YJNQF will align to the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate and offer eight Practice Skills Awards. The Certificate covers the current research, theory and practice in youth justice and enables students to develop their knowledge and judgement. The Practice Skills Awards will mirror the sections of the Youth Justice Skills Matrix, which identifies the core Youth Justice Skills and competencies. This development is of interest in relation to validation because it is proposed that it can result in the award of credit for Continuous Professional Development (CPD). A version of the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate, the practice skills awards and CPD courses will also be made available via a new app, which will utilise online portfolios and reflective blogging.

## 2.3 Validation and the labour market

National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, outcomes-based, competence-oriented qualifications that are based on national occupational standards (NOS). They are mainly targeted to people who are currently in work and provide evidence of professional competence. They can be taken as a qualification on their own, or as part of an apprenticeship. NVQs are assessed through evidence of performance against certain work-related tasks, rather than formal examinations. They can be individualised to the learner, to fit around his/her work commitments. There are no time limits on the completion of NVQs, no age limits and no special entry requirements<sup>4</sup>.

The QALL pillar of the CQFW recognises non-formal training delivered by private sector training providers and employers. However, the Review of the CQFW found that although there were some good practice examples at sector level, there were concerns about levels of employer engagement with RPL at a wider strategic level (Arad Research Ltd, 2014).

Nevertheless, the Review also reported that the CQFW provides particular benefits for employers that provide learning. According to two sources reviewed for the report (National Training Federation Wales (2012), *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales – Handbook for Work Based Learning Providers*; and, Sheehan, A. (2013), *Recognising Non-formal Learning in Wales*) the implementation of credit infrastructure within the CQFW “makes it more responsive to the needs of employers, enabling employees to achieve the skills and qualifications that employers need”. The report cites the example of the Betsi Cadwalader University (BCU) Local Health Board, which developed accredited training packages for their staff. This training was written and delivered by clinicians. As a result, the training was linked to service and clinician need, which meant it was better able to develop transferable skills among the workforce and theory could be quickly implemented into practical application. Similarly, the Review mentions Eliesha Cymru, which developed a recognised training course in Knowledge and Information Management and, in so doing,

<sup>4</sup> City and Guilds, NVQs and SVQs. Internet: <http://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and-apprenticeships/qualifications-explained/nvqs-svqs-keyskills-vocational-skillsforlife>; Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), NVQs. Internet: <http://www.ciob.org/Your-Career/national-vocational-qualifications-nvqs>

found that units could be developed quickly to respond to new industry needs, allowing accredited training to be piloted before qualifications were fully developed.

Stakeholders interviewed for the Review mentioned sectors or industries with traditionally weaker links to recognised education and training that had used the CQFW to recognise and unitise learning. Examples mentioned in the report are the cleaning industry, real estate agents, housing associations and libraries (Arad Research Limited, 2014).

An example of employers within a specific sector utilising the QALL pillar of the CQFW can be found in the logistics sector. In 2013, a project run by Skills for Logistics enabled bus, coach and lorry drivers to gain national recognition through CQFW for the knowledge and skills they gained through mandatory training for the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). Through the project, the most popular periodic training subjects were used to develop nine CQFW units. The formal recognition of the drivers' learning is considered to be beneficial for a number of reasons:

- Many of the drivers had low levels of formal qualifications and had not engaged in any training for some time;
- The recognition of the training with CQFW credit reinforced its status and value;
- The drivers gained confidence to go on to further training and qualifications;
- The profile and status of employment in the sector was enhanced;
- Employers benefited from up-skilled and motivated drivers;
- The projects supported the industry's ambition to raise the professional status of its drivers (Arad Research, 2014).

The RPL Wales project, which is described in the Box in Section 2.2 aimed to improve the links between the higher education providers involved and the labour market.

### 2.3.1 Skills audits

Careers Wales offers support to help adults (aged over 18) to manage their career and overcome barriers to employment through its Skills Gateway service. Through Skills Gateway individuals can:

- Access help from careers advisers via web, telephone and face-to-face (the latter for the unemployed only);
- Gain employability skills through either 1-1 interactions or group sessions;
- Find information on training and courses;
- Identify funding and help if they have been made redundant (support with ReAct funding and applications – see below for more details on the ReAct programme).

Careers Advisers working with adults do not use a specific skills audit tool. All individuals accessing the careers service will be assessed through a diagnostic, which will determine what kind of support they need. Some will only require some basic support with their job search. Others are supported through ongoing guidance/coaching which includes help to address their barriers and the development of an Employment and Skills Action Plan (where they need it). This Action Plan – which is only used for unemployed clients – sets out their qualifications and experience, as well as any gaps in skills. It outlines steps they can take towards returning to the labour market.

The Careers Wales website has an online application which records the individual's skills, experiences and qualifications. This is maintained in a learner profile and can be used to apply for opportunities. The Learning Pathway plan begins this process for learners whilst they are in school (from year 9, i.e. age 13) and can be continued after leaving education and into the labour market. The Learning Pathway Plan includes a section on informal achievements and experiences.

The ReAct programme<sup>5</sup> provides opportunities for people affected by redundancy to gain new skills and encourages employers to employ workers who have been made redundant. As part of this programme, individuals have their training needs assessed by Careers Wales.

In addition, work-based Skills Passports have been developed which aim to provide employees with a transferable record of their qualifications and experience and which can be easily assessed by future employers. Skills Passports operate at sector level<sup>6</sup> although take-up has been mixed in the sectors which have developed them. (See the country report for England and Northern Ireland for more detail).

## 2.4 Validation and the third sector

No specific projects were identified in the third sector for this report.

## 3 Links to national qualification systems

The CQFW was adopted in 2002. Its implementation phase ran from 2003-2014 and a review of its impact was carried out in 2014 (Arad Research Ltd, 2014). The findings of this review and the follow-up actions taken since it was published have a notable impact on validation in Wales, in particular with regards to the QALL pillar of the Framework. A summary of some of the key findings of the Review, which are relevant to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, are presented in the box below. Other findings are presented elsewhere within the main body of this report.

### Box 2 Qualitative Review of the Impact of the CQFW

The Welsh Government commissioned Arad Research to undertake a qualitative review of the CQFW and make recommendations for any future qualifications framework. The Review involved desk-based literature reviews and interviews with key stakeholders in the education and employment sectors in Wales and across the UK.

Some key findings of this review, which are of relevance to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, are listed below:

- Stakeholders identified **greater recognition of prior and informal learning through the QALL pillar of the CQFW to be one of its main impacts**, with particular benefits for disadvantaged learner groups (e.g. the homeless, offenders and adult learners engaged in adult and community learning programmes), helping to raise aspirations and promote progression opportunities.
- A broad range of stakeholders felt that a benefit of the CQFW was the **flexibility** it created, for example enabling learners to choose from a wide variety of non-traditional learning routes. It was felt that, **through RPL, the Framework helped employers and employees to avoid duplication** of training.
- Avoiding the need to repeat learning was particularly noted as a benefit amongst employers in sectors with a very mobile workforce, e.g. the health sector, the creative and cultural industries and the prison services.
- However, **RPL was perceived to be complicated** and onerous in relation to its potential benefits. The complexity involved in assessing experiential learning was identified as a disincentive to employers, providers and awarding organisations.
- The CQFW played a role in **recognising non-mainstream provision** and enabled providers to develop innovative curriculum offers for learners at the margins of formal education and training. This, together with associated projects, was felt by stakeholders to have encouraged a broader range of organisations to develop more consistency and opportunities through the lifelong

<sup>5</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/reactemployers/react-for-individuals/?lang=en>

<sup>6</sup> Examples include: Construction, Financial Services, Food and Drink, Manufacturing, Creative and Cultural, Hospitality, Nuclear, Process Industries, IT, Retail, Health, Sport and Active Leisure.

learning route.

- Nevertheless, many stakeholders believed that the CQFW was **not used in practice as much as had been hoped**. A range of reasons for this low take-up were put forward, including a lack of senior level strategic support from the Welsh Government, perceived complexities relating to the language and guidance used during the implementation phase, levels of bureaucracy and paperwork surrounding recognition, and time and resource issues to assess experiential learning, particularly for employers.
- It was also felt that **learners' focus on full qualifications prohibited potential engagement with the CQFW**, due to a lack of understanding of credit accumulation and transfer.
- Some stakeholders suggested that in reality, the **parity of qualifications and seamless progression routes sought by the CQFW did not exist**.
- There was **strong support for the CQFW to continue** but stakeholders considered its current low profile and lack of strategic investment were barriers to its use and impact.

*Excerpted from Arad Research Ltd, 2014*

Following the Review, a number of changes have been made to the CQFW. The Framework was originally designed to cover all types of learning and qualifications, including both non-formal and informal learning. The QALL pillar has now been re-designed to separate formal LLL from non-formal. Informal learning is now outside of the scope of the CQFW as by its nature it does not comply with the high level principles of the framework. Ownership of the QALL pillar has been transferred from Government back to the sector, with a view to making formal and non-formal learning less bureaucratic and more accessible.

The changes were made because concerns were highlighted in the Review about the bureaucracy associated with the recognition of QALL, the time taken and the requirements placed on centres. It was felt that detailed requirements placed on learning can 'formalise' it, whereby making the learning lose its non-formal characteristic (Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2014).

The CQFW continues to comprise three pillars of learning, as described below.

1. **Formal regulated learning** (general and vocational qualifications, i.e. Entry, Essential Skills, GCSEs, AS/A levels, Vocational qualifications and the Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) Qualification), which can be found **on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)**;

It is also possible to acquire credit for units on the CQFW via recognition of prior learning (RPL) for other learning and achievements that have not been certificated. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) in relation to the CQFW is understood as *"a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning"* (Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2015b). According to the CQFW high level principles, recognised bodies should have 'established policies and practices in place in relation to RPL' (Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2014b).

The Interim Standard Conditions of Recognition set out rules for AOs and qualifications. The Interim Standard Conditions include a section on RPL, which includes the same definition of RPL as used in Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition. RPL is defined as:

*(a) identification by an awarding body of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a Learner:*

*(i) prior to that Learner taking a qualification, which the awarding body makes available or proposes to make available and,*

*(ii) which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification; and,*

*(b) recognition by an awarding body of that learning and/or attainment through amendment to the requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.*

It should be noted that in the summer of 2016, revised content relating to the regulated pillar of the CQFW will be included in an updated e-brochure on the CQFW.

## 2. **Formal regulated learning** which can be found on the **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)**;

RPL is also possible for qualifications on the higher education pillar. The (FHEQ) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland is based on the premise that qualifications should be awarded for the achievement of outcomes and attainment, rather than years of study. Qualification descriptors are therefore used to describe the outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications.

Responsibility for RPL in the HE sector lies ultimately with the degree awarding body or other awarding organisation. However, RPL is included in the [Quality Code for HE](#), which sets out 'expectations' that all HE providers in the UK are required to meet. Each expectation is accompanied by a series of indicators that reflect 'sound practice' and through which providers can demonstrate that they are meeting the relevant expectation. See the country report for England and Northern Ireland for more detail.

## 3. **Lifelong learning** – both formal and non-formal learning, which are found in the **Quality Assured Lifelong Learning (QALL)** pillar.

As explained above, the QALL pillar is intended to recognise non-formal and formal learning that takes place outside of HE and general and vocational education and training.

The focus of the QALL pillar is to recognise formal lifelong learning and bespoke, non-formal, lifelong learning provision, for example in-house company training, adult and community education, training in the voluntary sector, etc (Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2014). Non-formal learning includes, for example:

- in-house company training,
- adult and community learning, including learning to assist adults to return to learning,
- introductory or additional learning undertaken by all types of learners that might help them to move into regulated units and/or qualifications,
- learning which is additional to QCF units and/or qualifications,
- training that the individual might do as part of a job which is not formally recognised currently,
- specialist hobby-based learning provided by a variety of organisations, such as libraries, museums, unions and voluntary organisations (Welsh Government website, accessed February 2016).

In order to have these types of learning recognised on the QALL pillar, providers must adopt the CQFW high level design principles, which include level descriptors, credit value, learning outcomes, assessment criteria and National Occupational Standards (NOS)/Industry/Professional standards.

The recognition process for QALL was piloted in autumn 2015 and options have been presented to the CQFW Advisory Group on the way forward. The recognition process described in the box below is therefore likely to change in the summer of 2016.

### Box 3 The QALL recognition process

QALL enables non-formal learning to be recognised as a unit within the CQFW.

Through QALL, non-formal learning must be identified in recognised units, which can only be awarded by acknowledged bodies operating within the CQFW. These are either recognised HEIs, awarding bodies, chartered bodies, or organisations accredited under a standard such as Investors in People.

Organisations must show compliance with the CQFW High Level Principles and must seek approval from the CQFW Advisory Group via a letter of request. To date, acknowledged bodies operating within the CQFW are mainly existing Awarding Organisations (AOs).

Organisations that do not currently operate within the CQFW (e.g. employers, vendor organisations) are advised to build working relationships with awarding bodies and HEIs to develop their knowledge, expertise and capacity in the application of credit systems to their learning provision.

According to the high level principles, all QALL units must have a clearly stated purpose for the learner, which should fall under one of the following:

- recognise personal growth and engagement in learning;
- prepare for further learning or training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area;
- prepare for employment;
- confirm occupational competence and/or 'licence to practice'; and,
- updating and continuing professional development (CPD)

Approved QALL units can only be delivered by a provider that is an approved centre of the Recognised Body. Organisations with limited experience of delivering units or qualifications will often work together with an experienced recognised provider. There is normally a formal partnership agreement between a third-party provider and the centre, which details the arrangements for quality assurance on which the reputation and value of the award of credit relies.

Sources: Sheehan, 2013, *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2014b* and *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2015a*

The CQFW recognises full and partial completion of qualifications. It enables learners to transfer their knowledge and skills between career paths, providers and countries (Arad Research Ltd, 2014). Credit is understood as *“an award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified credit level. The amount of credit attributed is based upon an estimation of the learning time it would take the average learner to achieve the learning outcomes specified. Credit is a measure of the learning time assigned to a set of learning outcomes”*. Credit is awarded for the achievement of learning outcomes and this is done through the achievement of CQFW units (Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2014b). QALL can be used to recognise non-formal learning provision in the form of units on the CQFW and RPL can be used to acquire CQFW units on the two QALL (formal and non-formal) pillars of the framework.

Agored Cymru (a Welsh regulated Awarding Organisation) states that “RPL may be used to claim one or more units of a qualification but cannot be used against part of a unit. If a learner partially meets the assessment criteria of a unit, s/he must provide evidence to fulfil the remaining assessment criteria” (Agored Cymru Centre Handbook). The Agored Cymru policy also states that in some circumstances there may be a limit to the proportion of a qualification that can be achieved by either credit transfer or RPL. For example, it is only possible to achieve up to 50 % of an Access to Higher Education Diploma through credit transfer or RPL. Credits/units achieved through RPL are to be recorded on the claims for

credit towards a full qualification, and certificates and/or credit transcripts awarded by Agored Cymru identify RPL credits specifically.

In the higher education sector, Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is described as *“a process that enables people of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. [...] A person's learning and experience can be formally recognised and taken into account to:*

- *gain entry to further or higher education courses,*
- *give exemption from certain parts of a new course of study,*
- *qualify for an award in an appropriate subject in further or higher education”.*<sup>7</sup>

Higher education in the UK has a modular credit based structure. The credit system is integrated into the qualifications framework. The FHEQ credit specification and guidance document states that the amount of credit allocated to any particular achievement must be independent of the mode of the learning but focuses on level and volume and that credit can be awarded through a process of accreditation of prior learning (APL) or experiential learning (APEL) – i.e. RPL. Again there may be limits to the proportion of the award that can be achieved through RPL.

University credits awarded through RPL can be either ‘general’ or ‘specific’. ‘General credit’ is usually given to reflective writing or a portfolio which can be mapped against a given level in the CQFW framework – from level 4 to level 7. ‘Specific credit’ can be mapped against the framework and also into a named academic pathway and academic module[s] (Treadwell, 2014).

There is no formal data on the level of provision of RPL by providers, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it is very small scale. With regards to the QALL pillar, by 2014 there were over 1 000 QALL units on the CQFW. More recent data on this is not available.

## 4 Standards

Non-formal QALL units, where appropriate, should be developed using National Occupational Standards (NOS), where they exist, or relevant industry, sector or professional body standards where they do not (Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2015b). NOS are the basis for the aforementioned NVQs.

It is worth noting here that there have been some changes relating to NOS. They are no longer a mandatory requirement in England for either qualifications or apprenticeships. From 2016, NOS will move to a three nation-managed system; accountability for NOS will be transferred from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) to another public sector organisation. Decisions on the detail of how NOS will be managed are the responsibility of the Devolved Administrations (i.e. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), who are currently considering next steps. The National Occupational Standards Governance Group will ensure the contents of the NOS database will remain publicly available and employers throughout the UK can continue to use NOS if they so choose. The Welsh Minister for Skills and Science has confirmed the continuing commitment of the Welsh Government to the UK's national occupational standards and the inclusion of qualifications in apprenticeship frameworks (information provided by Welsh Government, August 2016).

RPL is conducted in relation to the same formal learning curricula/standards as those used in the assessment of formal learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from HESA:

[https://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/studrec/show\\_file/15051/a%5E\\_%5EAPEL.html](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/studrec/show_file/15051/a%5E_%5EAPEL.html)

## 5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

### National-level stakeholders

The Welsh Government leads on the management of the CQFW. Partners involved in the CQFW implementation include HEFCW and external social partners located in Government departments, agencies, Awarding Organisations, higher education and training providers (CQFW Implementation Plan and Handbook 2009-2014).

Qualifications Wales was established in September 2015 as the new independent regulator of non-degree qualifications and the regulated qualification system in Wales. It is represented on the CQFW Advisory Group, which comprises representatives of the following organisations:

- Welsh Government
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW),
- Qualifications Wales,
- Careers Wales,
- ColegauCymru (Colleges Wales),
- Federation of Awarding Bodies,
- Welsh Local Government Association,
- NHS Wales,
- Adult Community Learning Network,
- National Union of Students (NUS) Wales,
- The Care Council for Wales, and
- The National Training Federation for Wales.

With regard to HE, as outlined above, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) has issued guidelines for institutions to consider implementing and promoting accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) (HEFCW, 2010). As mentioned above, and in more detail in the report for England and Northern Ireland, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education (across the UK) issued and will monitor the [Quality Code for HE](#).

### Awarding bodies and learning providers

As is the case in the rest of the UK, responsibility for the implementation of all stages of validation (from the design of the approach through to its evaluation and review) lies with the learning providers and awarding bodies. According to the Conditions of Recognition, where an awarding body has in place a policy for the recognition of prior learning, it must:

- (a) ensure that the policy which it has in place enables the awarding body to award qualifications in accordance with its Conditions of Recognition,
- (b) publish that policy, and
- (c) comply with that policy.

Education and training providers have responsibility for the implementation of RPL relating to learning on the CQFW and should have in place established policies and practices for its implementation.

### Private sector actors (including social partners)

Private sector training providers and employers can use the QALL facility of the CQFW to have training they provide recognised in the form of a CQFW unit. See Section 2.3 for more details.

### **Third sector organisations**

As mentioned above, Agored Cymru – a charitable trust and social enterprise – is one of the QALL acknowledged bodies. Agored Cymru has also developed a CPD qualification in RPL (presented in more detail in Section 7.3).

Moreover, the purpose of QALL is to recognise learning which is taking place outside of the formal sector, therefore it is a means of bringing in third sector and private sector partners into the education arena.

## **6 Information, advice and guidance**

### **6.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment**

Awareness-raising and recruitment is the responsibility of individual learning providers.

### **6.2 Information, advice and guidance**

The provision of information, advice and guidance in relation to the various methods of validation in place in Wales is delivered by the individual learning providers which offer validation opportunities. For example, the Agored Cymru RPL policy states that within its centres, staff with appropriate expertise should be available to give advice on the RPL process. It also states that Agored Cymru and its centres must make learners aware of the purpose and availability of RPL, and suggests that prospectuses, web-based marketing and advice and guidance sessions could be used to do this.

In the HE sector, information provision is again the responsibility of the individual institution. For example, the University of South Wales (USW) has a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), which offers online advice and guidance for prospective RPL applicants. In other institutions, such as Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of South Wales, responsibility for promoting RPL lies with the academic schools (Treadwell, 2014). Part of the RPL Wales project involved the development of a series of guidance sessions and accredited short course modules linked to 'Making Your Experience Count,' 'Recognising Prior Learning,' 'Portfolio Development,' 'Learning Contract Design and Development' and 'RPL Mentor Training' (Treadwell, 2014)

### **6.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners**

No measures to improve awareness of validation amongst guidance practitioners in Wales were identified during the research for this report. However, Welsh Government did provide information sessions to Careers Wales staff in 2015 regarding updates to the curriculum, which included the Qualifications Framework (information provided by Careers Wales, via e-mail).

## **7 Validation practitioners**

### **7.1 Profile of validation practitioners**

RPL 'practitioners' are existing staff working in education and training providers.

For instance, in the HE sector, RPL relating to career development tends to involve guidance from an RPL adviser or mentor. The advisory role relating to RPL tends to be carried out by 'an experienced administrative officer with discrete awareness of university student entry processes', whilst an academic member of the university (usually one with work-based adult

learning experience) carries out the role of RPL mentor. A need for clearer identification of academic and administrative staff RPL roles and responsibilities, for RPL staff development and recognition in workload is identified in the final report of the RPL Wales project (Treadwell, 2014).

## 7.2 Qualification requirements

There are currently no formal qualification requirements for staff involved in delivering validation in Wales.

## 7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Agored Cymru offers a continuing professional development (CPD) qualification in RPL. The [Level 3 Award in Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)](#) is intended for practitioners working at any level in the education and training sector (i.e. general, vocational, higher education and adult education) across the UK. The qualification is made up of three units: the theory of RPL; formative RPL; and, summative RPL. The qualification is not mandatory however it is hoped that the introduction of the qualification should lead to a greater degree of consistency in the application of RPL.<sup>8</sup> It is currently offered by two Agored Cymru centres, but to date, no learners have completed the course (information provided Agored Cymru, via e-mail).

As part of the RPL Wales project, introductory RPL workshops were held at both Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of South Wales. A demand for virtual RPL Communities of Practice (CoP) was identified during these workshops and, in response, the RPL Wales Moodle site was set up.

The CWBL at the Cardiff Metropolitan University has set up an inter-institutional peer support network for staff interested in engaging in WBL and in RPL.

The RPL Wales final report suggests that there is a need to build staff capacity and confidence with respect to RPL and WBL in the HE institutions and FE Colleges involved in the region and to increase awareness of RPL across these organisations (Treadwell, 2014).

## 8 Quality assurance

With regards to learning on the CQFW, there are no separate quality assurance processes for RPL - an RPL assessment process should be subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment. As an example, the Agored Cymru RPL policy states that internal and external verifiers must confirm the process of RPL and the proposed award of credit. It also requires that data on the use of RPL must be made available as part of the annual quality review process. With regards to QALL provision, if an Awarding Organisation is acknowledged to deliver qualifications within the regulated pillar of the CQFW, it is also able to operate on the QALL pillar too. Formal lifelong learning is subject to existing quality assurance procedures. The assessment and quality assurance arrangements for non-formal learning are determined by the awarding bodies and HEIs (Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2015b).

In HE the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) oversees how well individual universities and colleges meet their responsibilities. With the introduction of the new QAA Quality Code, RPL has been taken into account since August 2014 in the reviews of HE institutions which are carried out by the QAA on a four to six yearly basis.

A framework for evaluation has not been identified during the research for this report.

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<sup>8</sup> Information provided by Agored Cymru

## 9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

### 9.1 Funding

Outside of the HE sector, it is not currently possible to draw down funding to carry out RPL, unless it is done 'within' the provision of a qualification via formal learning (i.e. for access/exemptions).

With regard to HE, HEFCW provides credit-based funding for part-time and postgraduate provision, which could include RPL modules. If an RPL module is provided within a full-time undergraduate course, it is covered in the funding for the student placement, which is made up of a mixture of HEFCW funding (which may be a very small proportion for full-time undergraduate students) and funding from tuition fees<sup>9</sup> (although it is possible that fees may be discounted for RPL modules). This will not necessarily reflect what it costs to deliver the modules taken or how much the institution allocates internally for the delivery of the modules (the institution is free to spend HEFCW funding how it wishes and is not restricted by the way in which it was calculated). Eligible RPL modules are not treated differently than other modules in calculating HEFCW funding. Funding is not provided for the use of RPL for entry or admissions purposes, for experiential learning which has previously been accredited elsewhere, or for credits from which students are exempted<sup>10</sup>.

Cardiff Metropolitan University for example plans to charge a fee for RPL which requires an assessment of the individual's learning. The fee will vary depending on the intended outcome, but will cover an initial advisory meeting and two assessments (Interview with Cardiff Met, 2016).

### 9.2 Distribution of costs

With regards to RPL, to take one example, the Agored Cymru RPL policy states that its centres may charge learners a fee for RPL services but does not give any guidance on how much that fee might be (Agored Cymru, 2011).

### 9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

The Review of the CQFW found that QALL had helped to introduce learners with low educational attainment to more formal learning in 'achievable, bite-size pieces', and providing an understanding of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and evidence. For disadvantaged learners who had dropped out of formal education, recognition of achievement can be highly positive and help to raise their aspirations.

For instance, the Family Learning Report (Burns, K. (2013), *CQFW Family Learning Report*) explains that QALL accreditation of family learning had a positive impact on learners including improved confidence in their ability to learn and engagement with further learning. Similarly, the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) (CWVYS, (2013) *Recognition of non-formal and informal workforce learning: The benefits of strategic development support for Voluntary Youth Work organisations*) found that over 70 % of students stated an intention to undertake further accreditations or qualifications as a result of increased recognition of non-formal and informal workforce learning in Voluntary Youth Work organisations.

<sup>9</sup> Tuition grants are also available for some students to cover their fees.

<sup>10</sup> Based on information provided by a representative of HEFCW and the HEFCW Circular: funding the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL), published in December 2010. Internet: [http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars\\_2010/W10%2042HE%20Funding%20the%20accreditation%20of%20prior%20experimental%20learning%20APEL.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/W10%2042HE%20Funding%20the%20accreditation%20of%20prior%20experimental%20learning%20APEL.pdf)

## 9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

### 9.4.1 Validation trends

National data on RPL in relation to the CQFW is not available, except in relation to HE students. It is thought that in practice, RPL relating to regulated qualifications and QALL is very small-scale in Wales. Although Awarding Organisations have RPL policies in place, one interviewee consulted in 2014 suggested that there is little motivation amongst learning providers to take forward actual implementation.<sup>11</sup>

With regards to the HE sector, HESA collects data on the number of students with some element of their course taken through APEL and whether modules are taken through RPL, known as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), in Wales. This data was collected for the first time in the academic year 2012/13<sup>12</sup>. The results of the data collection for the academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15 are presented in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 below. As can be seen from the data, APEL in the Welsh HE sector is still very small in scale and has fallen overall between 2012/13 and 2014/15. No specific cause for this drop in take-up/provision of APEL is identifiable from the underlying HESA data.

**Table 9.1** Number of students with some element of their course taken through APEL, by mode and level of study

Number of students with some element of their course taken through APEL, by mode and level of study				
Mode of study	Level of study	Number of students	Number with at least one module taken through APEL/APEL module	Proportion with at least one module taken through APEL/APEL module
<b>2012/13</b>				
Full-time and sandwich	Postgraduate	15 821	75	0.5 %
	Undergraduate	76 986	713	0.9 %
Part-time	Postgraduate	12 032	108	0.9 %
	Undergraduate	29 978	245	0.8 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>134 817</b>	<b>1 141</b>	<b>0.8 %</b>
<b>2013/14</b>				
Full-time and sandwich	Postgraduate	16 563	83	0.5 %

<sup>11</sup> Stakeholder interview

<sup>12</sup>

[http://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/option,com\\_studrec/task,show\\_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12051/href,a%5e\\_%5eAPEL.html/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12051/href,a%5e_%5eAPEL.html/)

	Undergraduate	77 603	719	0.9 %
Part-time	Postgraduate	12 283	196	1.6 %
	Undergraduate	28 396	147	0.5 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>134 845</b>	<b>1 145</b>	<b>0.8 %</b>
<b>2014/15</b>				
Full-time and sandwich	Postgraduate	15 463	48	0.3 %
	Undergraduate	76 533	258	0.3 %
Part-time	Postgraduate	12 458	150	1.2 %
	Undergraduate	26 615	142	0.5 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>131 069</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>0.5 %</b>

**Table 9.2 Number of modules taken through APEL, by mode and level of study**

Number of modules taken through APEL, by mode and level of study						
2012/13						
Mode of study	Level of study	Number of students on modules				Proportion taken through APEL/APEL module
		Module taken through APEL	APEL module	Module not taken/available through APEL	Total	
Full-time and sandwich	Postgraduate	124	29	71 199	71 352	0.2 %
	Undergraduate	4 372	312	486 650	491 334	1.0 %
Part-time	Postgraduate	149	63	28 498	28 710	0.7 %
	Undergraduate	945	88	69 473	70 506	1.5 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>5 590</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>655 820</b>	<b>661 902</b>	<b>0.9 %</b>
2013/14						
Full-time and sandwich	Postgraduate	241	29	78 738	79 008	0.3 %

Number of modules taken through APEL, by mode and level of study						
	Undergraduate	3 639	307	482 139	486 085	0.8 %
Part-time	Postgraduate	180	133	29 057	29 370	1.1 %
	Undergraduate	644	69	64 942	65 655	1.1 %
Total		4 704	538	654 876	660 118	0.8 %
<b>2014/15</b>						
Full-time and sandwich	Postgraduate	157	14	79 771	79 942	0.2 %
	Undergraduate	1 187	35	479 208	480 430	0.3 %
Part-time	Postgraduate	162	74	31 643	31 879	0.7 %
	Undergraduate	494	27	58 443	58 964	0.9 %
Total		2 000	150	649 065	651 215	0.3 %

*\*Number of students on modules*

*Notes: Students on modules are recorded against one of three categories in the APEL field 'Module taken through APEL', 'APEL module', 'Module not taken/available through APEL'.*

*Further information is available in the HESA student record coding manual:*

[http://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/option,com\\_studrec/task,show\\_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12051/href,a%5E%5EAPEL.html/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12051/href,a%5E%5EAPEL.html/)

*Data provided by HEFCW*

#### 9.4.2 Validation users

As indicated above, national data on RPL relating to the CQFW is not available, except for the HE sector. The data collected for HE only breaks down the users of RPL according to the level of HE at which they are studying (undergraduate or postgraduate) and does not give details of any further characteristics.

#### 9.4.3 Validation and migrants / refugees and other disadvantaged groups

According to the stakeholders interviewed for the Review of the CQFW (several AOs and Sector Skills Councils, Welsh Government officials, third sector representatives, and local authority representatives), the opportunity to add new units to the QALL pillar of the CQFW opened up the framework to recognise a wider range of provision. This, in turn, meant that providers could develop innovative curriculum offers for non-traditional groups of learners, such as those not in education, employment or training (NEETs). (Arad Research Ltd, 2014).

With specific reference to refugees, in 2008, the Welsh Government published a Refugee Inclusion Strategy Action Plan.<sup>12</sup> As part of this, in 2013, work was carried out together with the Welsh Refugee Council to try to demonstrate how the CQFW could be used to recognise the prior learning of newly-arrived refugees in Wales as part of a UK recognised qualification. Dissemination events were held to raise awareness of the CQFW towards organisations delivering frontline advice, ESOL and vocational training to refugees, asylum seekers and

migrant workers. In addition, a pilot was run to recognise the prior learning of refugees, which led to two beneficiaries successfully completing their training and accreditation of prior learning from their country of origin. It was not possible through the research to find out if/how this work has been taken forward since then.

Currently, the Welsh Refugee Council does not provide opportunities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, it does offer other types of support to refugees relating to skills and employment. Two main projects which are currently ongoing are:

- **Refugees Working in Wales:** This project supports refugees with all matters relating to education and employment. It provides ESOL (English language) classes and one-to-one casework to help refugees to find a roadmap to accessing an occupation which matches their prior experience and qualifications. This would include, for example, signposting to local learning providers or participation in Job Club skills sessions. The ESOL courses were attended by 280 individuals in the final quarter of 2015 and around 35 separate clients accessed the casework per quarter.
- **Refugee Education Access Development:** This project involves providing support to refugees to help them find work. For example, volunteers will be trained to help refugees to prepare a curriculum vitae.

In addition, with regards to the recognition of prior formal learning, the Welsh Refugee Council works with UK NARIC to issue statements of comparability for the individuals' prior qualifications.

## 10 Validation methods

It has not been possible to identify what are the most commonly used methods through the course of the research for this report.

Assessment methods used for RPL relating to units/qualifications on the CQFW should be *"of equal rigour as other assessment methods, fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning"* (Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2015b). The Agored Cymru RPL policy states that learners wishing to achieve a unit via RPL can choose from two options. The first is to undertake the same assessments as those followed in the formal course of learning, although they do not have to attend taught sessions. If the learner does not attend taught sessions, an authenticity statement, *"signed and dated by the learner and signed by a witness (usually the tutor) must be obtained or the tutor may observe the learner undertaking the assessment"*. The second option is to submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous learning, skills and/or competence, which must be cross-referenced to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the relevant unit(s), together with an authenticity statement, signed and dated by the learner and signed by a witness (usually the tutor).

The specification for a QALL unit may set out the assessment method to be used, or offer a choice.

In the HE sector, the main assessment method used for RPL is a portfolio of evidence. The RPL Wales project identified a need to introduce new assessment mechanisms and found some examples of possible alternative approaches:

- recognition, and utilisation of work-based documentation, commentary or visual evidence;
- e-portfolios;
- semi-structured interviews; and,
- video-conferencing (as a vehicle to support assessment) (Treadwell, 2014).

NVQs are assessed through portfolios and observations. Candidates must give evidence that they have the competences set out in the NVQ standards. Assessors then test the

candidate's knowledge, understanding and work-based performance to make sure they can demonstrate competence in the workplace. Each unit of learning can be 'signed off' when the candidate is able to demonstrate that he/she has reached the required standard (City and Guilds).

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- Welsh Government
- Welsh Refugee Council



## Country report UK-Wales

2016 update to the European inventory on  
validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 Council recommendation on validation encourages Member States to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018. These arrangements will enable individuals to increase the visibility and value of their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home or in voluntary activities.

This country report is one of 36 that, together with a synthesis report and thematic reports, constitute the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The inventory is a regularly updated overview of validation practices and arrangements in all Member States, EFTA countries and Turkey. It is a reference point for information on validation in Europe. It is organised around the principles defined in the 2012 Council Recommendation that were further elaborated in the European guidelines for validation. This is its sixth update (2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2016).



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