FROM THEORY TO PRAXIS: THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF SCOTLAND

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Overview

- From theory to praxis: a decade of development in Scotland

- The transformative dimension of RPL

- Realising the dream? RPL in Higher Education

- Application of research to practice

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From theory to praxis: SCQF and RPL -a decade of development

2001-2003

- EU-funded project *APEL and Social Inclusion: The Learner's Perspective*

  - 4 stages of Learner redefinition

  - Development of identity in changeable social context

2003-2005

- EU-funded *Valuing Learning through Experience (VaLEx)*
  - model of RPL for hard to reach learners

- Key driver of RPL : the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework

- *Development of SCQF RPL Guidelines:*
  - formative and summative dimension , sector –wide

2005-2013

- Sector RPL development:

  - Policy drivers : a changing landscape

  - Role of Networks e.g. QAA/Universities Scotland HEI RPL Network

  - Link to European developments

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Exploring the transformative dimension of RPL in Scotland: current research and development

In Higher Education:

- Streamlining and enhancing RPL practices linked to national and institutional strategic objectives

In the workplace:

- E.g. Scottish Social Services RPL profiling: impact on workforce development, learner identity and professional practice

In a guidance context:

- *My Skills, My Future* RPL toolkit: impact on young people in secondary school, young people from a care or looked after background, older learners, people facing redundancy

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Recognising prior learning in HE: realising the dream

- **What does this require?**

  - Support and assessment processes that act as enablers rather than barriers to further learning

- **How can this be achieved?**

  - Opportunities presented by NQFs to challenge current practice

  - More formative, developmental approaches to RPL: the transformative dimension

  - Flexible pathways to and within HE: from policy rhetoric to reality

  - Requires greater understanding of nature and outcomes of informal learning

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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. PLIR

Programme of Work 2011-13

- 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

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Streamlining and Enhancing RPL Research project

Purpose:	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:	CRLL commissioned by QAA to undertake the project between April and July 2011
Approach:	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

Key research findings

- **Clearly identified need to enhance:**

  - CPD for staff

  - Use of Technology

  - Assessment practices

  - Monitoring, Tracking and Evaluation
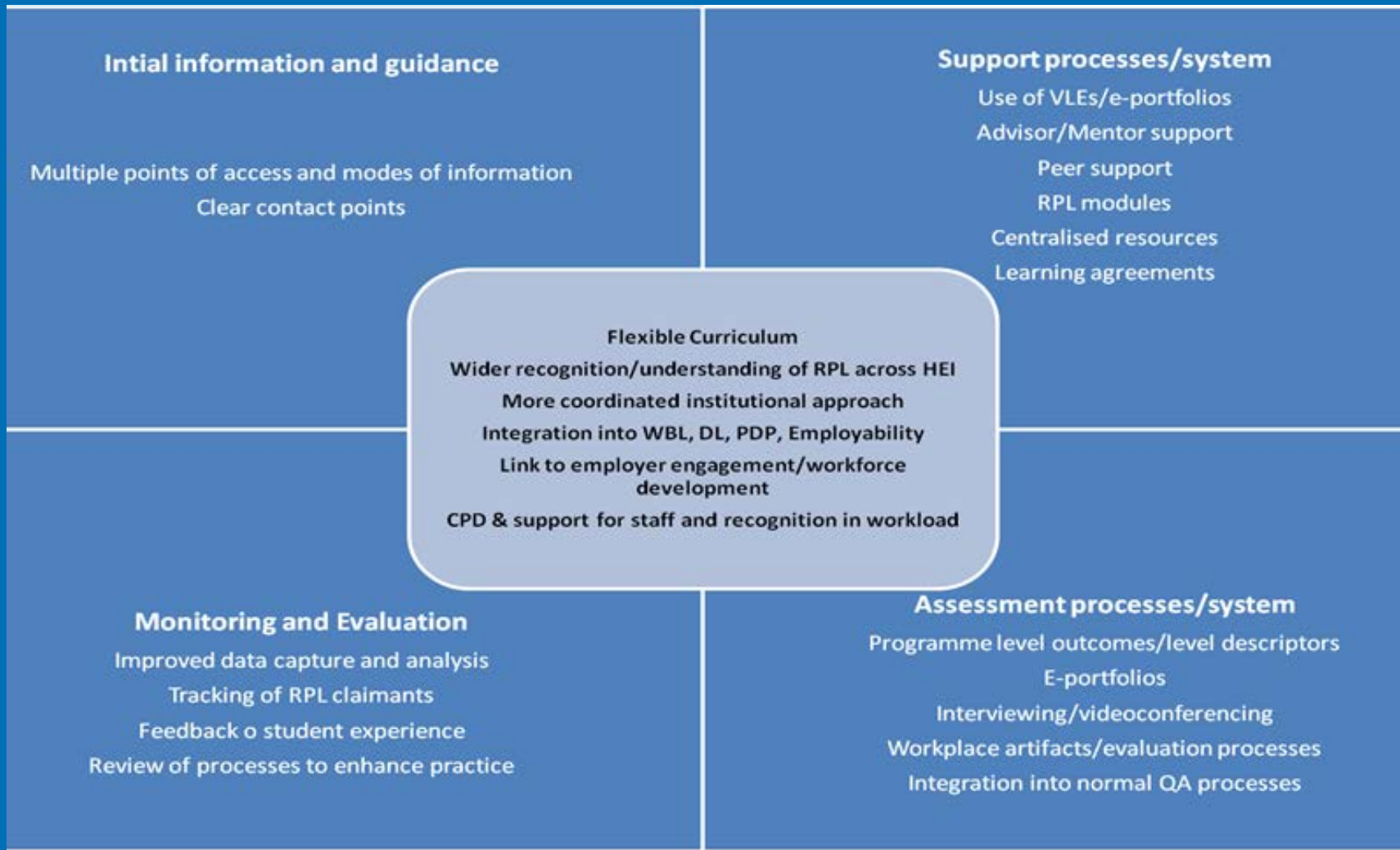
Enabling RPL in institutions

Streamlining and enhancing RPL support and assessment within HEIs require a set of 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, employability,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.

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Subsequent developments

- **National Streamlining guidelines for RPL in HE**

- **Evaluating student experience of RPL**

- **National RPL Framework project**

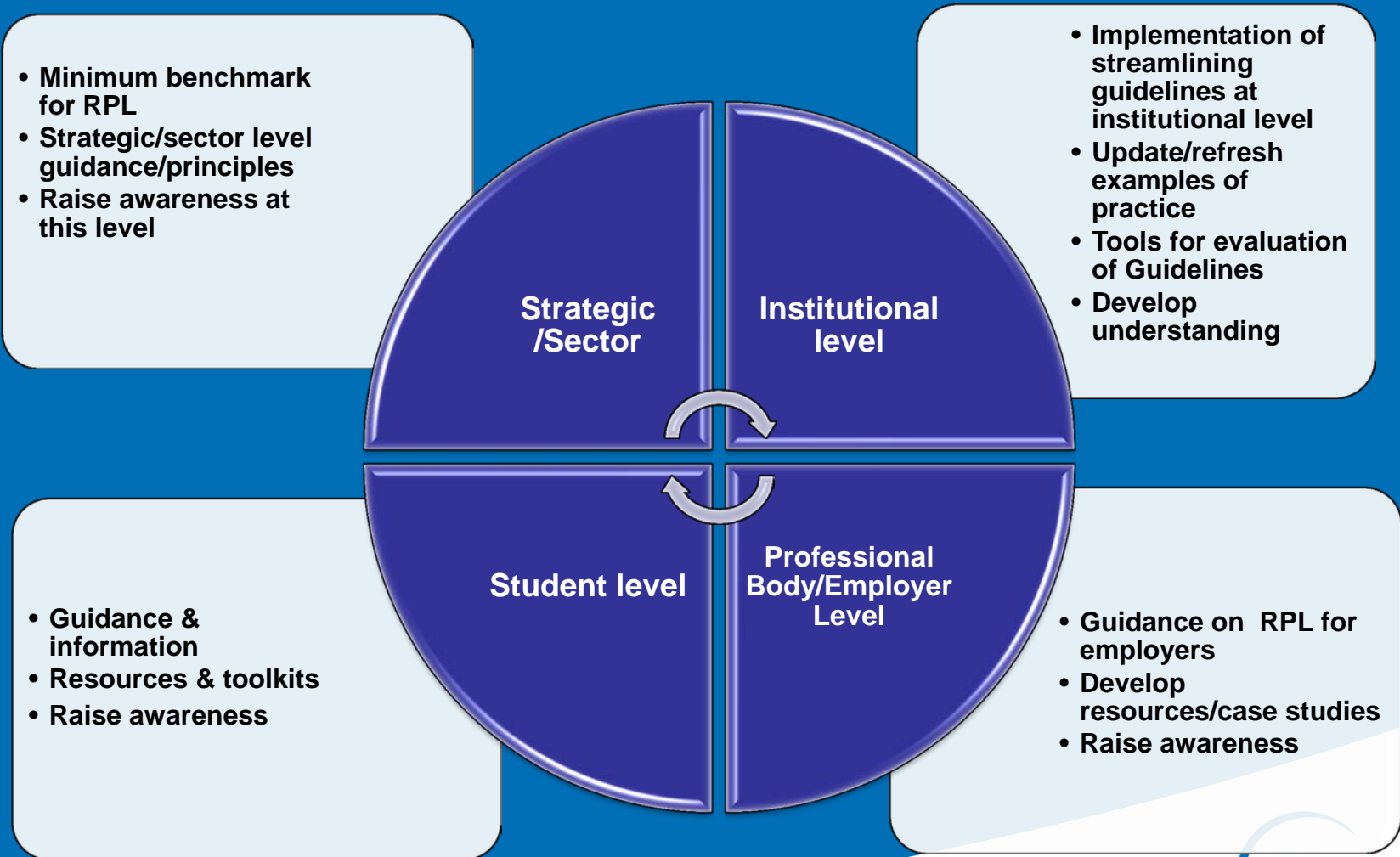- **European context of RPL development**

QAA RPL Streamlining Guidelines for HE

Intial information and guidance

Multiple points of access and modes of information

Clear contact points

Support processes/system

Use of VLEs/e-portfolios

Advisor/Mentor support

Peer support

RPL modules

Centralised resources

Learning agreements

Flexible Curriculum

Wider recognition/understanding of RPL across HEI

More coordinated institutional approach

Integration into WBL, DL, PDP, Employability

Link to employer engagement/workforce development

CPD & support for staff and recognition in workload

Monitoring and Evaluation

Improved data capture and analysis

Tracking of RPL claimants

Feedback o student experience

Review of processes to enhance practice

Assessment processes/system

Programme level outcomes/level descriptors

E-portfolios

Interviewing/videoconferencing

Workplace artifacts/evaluation processes

Integration into normal QA processes

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Researching the student experience of RPL

- **QAA – funded Network project to explore learner's perspectives of support and assessment May- July 2012**

  - **Key findings:**

    - Inconsistencies in assessment practices and lack of coherence between amount of credit claimed and levels of evidence required

    - Importance of role of advisor in RPL process, linked to need for professional development and training

    - Need to untangle complexities and variances between and within institutions in RPL assessment practices

    - Sheer resilience often required of learners reinforces need for more simplified, transparent and consistent practices across the sector

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National HE Framework for RPL

- Minimum benchmark for RPL
- Strategic/sector level guidance/principles
- Raise awareness at this level

Strategic /Sector

- Implementation of streamlining guidelines at institutional level
- Update/refresh examples of practice
- Tools for evaluation of Guidelines
- Develop understanding

Institutional level

- Guidance & information
- Resources & toolkits
- Raise awareness

Student level

Professional Body/Employer Level

- Guidance on RPL for employers
- Develop resources/case studies
- Raise awareness

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European context of RPL development

- **Role of RPL in modernisation agenda of HE within Europe-linked to LLL, economic growth, mobility, meeting skills demands (Europe 2020 strategy)**

- **Key vehicle NQF developments**

- **New conception of qualifications?**

- **Access to RPL remains patchy and uneven across member states in Europe**

- **EC Recommendation adopted November 2012: all member states comprehensive national systems for RPL by no later than 2018**

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In conclusion: Application of research to practice

- Policy-driven research and development in Scotland- reflective of wider European context

- Assessment practices do not support drive for more flexible learner journey

- NQF developments provide opportunity to step back and challenge practices that have dominated since late 1980s

- Valuing of RPL in supporting developmental, formative process in range of different contexts

- 3 key areas of development for RPL to become genuine gateway for further learning and development:

  - Exploitation of technology

  - Pedagogical understanding of informal learning

  - Enhance process of monitoring and evaluating RPL processes and outcomes

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And Finally..

Role of RPL in supporting developmental process and challenging nature of knowledge not visible outside 'RPL community'

Need for a rebranding?

'Learning at Work': interlinking between RPL; professional learning and development; work-based learning; flexible and blended learning; employability and work-related learning (Harris & Whittaker, 2011)

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