

Info Document — Recognition of Prior Learning

Introduction

SAQA recognises that there are barriers to implement RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning), such as: limited incentives for organisations to apply RPL; lack of funds and people to develop and maintain an RPL service at an affordable price; very few personnel who are trained to handle RPL; inadequate administrative supporting systems to do the work; that many organisations are unable to grant credits for part qualifications, and institutions that have admission systems without alternative access routes; and institutional resistance (unwillingness) to grant RPL credits.

- In other words — RPL has not been working properly.

Important facts about RPL

1. RPL can be applied for different reasons

SAQA recognises different kinds of RPL and purposes for RPL in relation to different contexts and classifications of knowledge, skills, competencies, especially for qualifications and part qualifications in the national learning system

2. Students (candidates) must be helped

Enable potential candidates to attain recognition of the appropriate knowledge and skills required for **personal development** and to get themselves in a better position for the **employment market**.

3. Everybody must apply RPL

RPL applies to Quality Councils, education institutions (colleges) and skills development providers (training organisations), work places, recognised professional bodies, RPL practitioners and finally the RPL candidates (students).

4. Special efforts for a specific group

A focus on RPL for **returning-to-learning youth** and **adults** needs to be encouraged and resourced in collaboration with all relevant stake-holders in the labour market and the national learning system

Terminology

“**Credit accumulation**” means that a student will do everything to total up the required credits to complete a qualification or a part qualification.

“**Credit transfer**” means the relocation of credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or different level (up-down), usually between different programmes, departments or (across) different institutions.

“**Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)**” means an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning needed to access to the workplace.

“**Informal learning**” means learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, including incidental learning.

“**Learning programme**” means a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.

“Lifelong learning” means learning that takes place in all sorts of contexts in life from different lifelong perspectives. It includes learning behaviours (doing things) and obtaining knowledge, understanding, related attitudes, values and competencies for personal growth, social and economic wellbeing, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and, especially, employability.

“Non-formal learning” means planned educational studies and experiences that are not intended to lead to the awarding of a (part) qualification. A **part qualification** is an assessed unit of learning that is part of a qualification.

“**Professional body**” is a body of expert practitioners in an occupational field.

“**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**” means the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.

RPL may be awarded by a diagnostic, formative or summative way, or during following a curriculum for **recognition** in the workplace or **advanced standing**.

Understandings of the Recognition of Prior Learning

When RPL is applied:

- a. The focus is on what has been learned and not on the status of the institution, organisation or place where the learning was obtained
- b. Credit is awarded for **knowledge** and **skills** acquired through experience and not merely for the fact that the candidate has had the experience
- c. Prior learning is discovered through assessment and/or other methods that can identify the knowledge, skills and competencies that have been acquired
- d. also important to the **RPL practice** are:
 1. Candidate guidance and support, the
 2. preparation of evidence and the
 3. development of a combination of **further teaching** and learning, mentoring and assessment.

Objectives of RPL

RPL must contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

It must make it easier for students to have access to, and make progress within a programme, getting ahead in education, training and career paths

In the past there was unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities. RPL must accelerate the redress of the past.

Qualifications may be awarded in whole or in part through RPL. Processes followed must be credible, quality assured and consistent with accepted and approved principles, criteria and all the relevant regulations

Qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NQF must include provision for alternative entry-level requirements so that candidates can be admitted to study towards the qualification, or part qualification, through RPL.

44. No distinction, other than that required for data analysis, must be made between records of learner credits and achievements for qualifications and/or part qualifications awarded as a result of RPL processes and those obtained via conventional means.

Roleplayer's Responsibilities

1. All Institutions have responsibilities:

- Provide **advice, counselling** and **support services** to assist RPL candidates prior to, during, and after RPL processes
- Establish an **appeal process** for RPL candidates to engage with RPL-related judgements
- Ensure an equitable **fee structure** for all RPL programmes and services including those programmes and services that involve the assessment of experiential learning for credit against existing formal qualifications or part qualifications

2. The professional Body must ensure an RPL route

Include an RPL route as an integral requirement for attainments of its **professional designations** as stipulated in the *SAQA Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Professional Bodies and the Registration of Professional Designations (2012)*.

3. RPL Candidate must:

Expect to be treated without unfair discrimination

Respect the processes and procedures of institutions and workplaces.
