

Policy and criteria for the recognition of prior learning

Purpose

1. This policy and these criteria provide for a framework for the implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within the context of the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) Act (Act 67 of 2008).

Preamble

2. This policy builds on the strengths of the policy developed by SAQA in 2002, as well as new insights gained from on-going practice and research, as it establishes the principles, framework and priorities for the further development of RPL as part of an evolving South Africa.
3. This policy repositions RPL in the following key areas:
 - i. As a resource to advance learning and acquire qualifications and part-qualifications.
 - ii. The construction of quality learning pathways that is both accessible and efficient for all those who use the system.
 - iii. The recognition of the complexity of RPL in relation to different contexts and classifications of knowledge, skills competencies and qualifications.
 - iv. Provides for a comprehensive resource driven approach to optimise the delivery of RPL services and programmes, including assessment
 - v. Confirms the focus on the quality assurance of RPL provision by designated authorities and agencies as it acknowledges the role of SAQA and the three Quality Councils (QCs): the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Umalusi and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).
 - vi. Recognises barrier to implementation including institutionalised resistance and lack of capacity, trained personnel, resources and systems at this level.
 - vii. Establishes a centralised coordinated supported mechanism to assist SA Payroll members to deal with barriers including accessing of government funding, building capacity and expanding provision in respect of the information, advising, curriculum development, assessment, and administrative aspects of a comprehensive RPL system.

Scope

4. This policy and its criteria apply to Quality Councils, accredited education and training providers, including workplaces and assessment sites where relevant, recognised professional bodies, and RPL practitioners registered and providing training and education within the payroll environment with particular focus to institutions and or members of the SA Payroll Association.

Definitions

5. **SA Payroll confirms and records the following definitions for interpretative value to this policy and within context**
 - i. "Credit accumulation" means the totalling of general credits required to complete a qualification or a part of a qualification that is usually limited to specific programmes, often within a particular institution
 - ii. "Credit transfer" means the vertical or horizontal relocation of specific credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or higher level that usually takes place between programmes, often between different institutions.
 - iii. "Credit accumulation and transfer system" means an arrangement wherein the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to enable lifelong learning
 - iv. "Formal learning" means learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment and is explicitly designated as learning. Formal learning leads to the award of a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.
 - v. "Informal learning" means learning that results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure.
 - vi. "National qualifications framework" means a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications. The NQF is a single integrated system comprised of three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks for: General and Further Education and Training; Higher Education; and Trades and Occupations.
 - vii. "Lifelong learning" means learning that takes place in all contexts in life from a life-wide, life-deep and lifelong perspective. It includes learning behaviours, obtaining knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and competences for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.
 - viii. "NQF Act" means the South African National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008).
 - ix. "Non-formal learning" means learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning towards a qualification.
 - x. "Provider" means a body that offers any education programme or occupational learning programmes that leads to a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.

- xi. "Professional body" means any body of expert practitioners in an occupational field, and includes an occupational body.
- xii. "Professional designation" means a title or status conferred by a professional body in recognition of a person's expertise and right to practice in an occupational field.
- xiii. "Qualification" means a qualification registered on the NQF.
- xiv. "Recognition of prior learning" is a developmental process that includes teaching, mentoring, assessing, accrediting and certifying the previous learning of a learner for the purposes of personal development, further learning and advancement in the workplace.
- xv. "RPL Institute" means a centralised facility empowered to fund, direct, evaluate and oversee the mainstreaming of RPL.
- xvi. "RPL practitioner" means a person who is registered with the RPL Institute in accordance with criteria established for this purpose. There are three types of RPL practitioners: Advisor, Facilitator and Administrator.

Principle and Context of RPL

- 6. RPL is a principle closely aligned to three key elements of the national policy discourse in South Africa since 1994:
 - i. As part of the political discourse of transformation, its intended role is to redress injustices and ensure effective access to formal learning.
 - ii. As part of the discourse of accreditation and lifelong learning, it renders explicit and certifiable, knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired experientially, at work, or in other contexts outside the formal education and training system.
 - iii. As part of an integrated NQF, its intension is to enhance flexibility and articulation in the education and training system. As such it accommodates all forms of learning.

Objectives of NQF

- 7. The objectives of the NQF are to:
 - i. Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements.
 - ii. Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths.
 - iii. Enhance the quality of education and training.
 - iv. Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.
 - v. Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.
- 8. The NQF is developed as an integrated framework overseen by SAQA and made up of three coordinated integrated sub-frameworks, each overseen by a quality council:

- i. Higher Education Qualifications sub-framework overseen by the Council on Higher Education
 - ii. General and Further Education and Training Qualifications sub-framework overseen by Umalusi
 - iii. Occupational Qualifications sub-framework overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
9. In terms of Section 13[h] of the NQF Act, and notwithstanding the provisions of any other Act, SAQA is required to develop and implement policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils, for assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer.

Objectives

10. The objectives of this policy and these criteria are to advance the objectives of the RPL through:
- i. Providing a framework for further development and implementation of RPL, including resourcing, effective delivery models and quality assurance
 - ii. Researching national and international RPL best practice
 - iii. Setting guidelines for gathering, documenting and reporting on RPL-related data
 - iv. Formulating industry policies in respect of RPL;
 - v. Enable the development and increased recognition of the role of RPL practitioners in the education and training system

Common principles

11. SA Payroll acknowledges that
- i. RPL is a multi-dimensional process through which non-formal and informal learning are measured, accredited and certified against the requirements for credit, access or inclusion in the formal education and training system.
 - ii. RPL is multi-contextual in that it may be developed and implemented differently for the purposes of personal development, further learning and advancement in the workplace as described within the three sub-frameworks of the NQF.
 - iii. RPL may be employed at any level of learning and in many different contexts. Further, it may be conducted through a variety of methods using a combination of teaching-learning and assessment approaches as appropriate. The purposes and contexts determine the practices and outcomes of RPL.
 - iv. Assessment is an integral feature of all forms of RPL but it does not exist in isolation from a range of other strategies associated with bringing these different sources of knowledge and forms of learning into a shared discursive space where comparisons and judgments can be made.
 - v. RPL may lead to award of credits towards a qualification at a diagnostic, formative or summative point, or in-curriculum to fast-track the learning process resulting in opportunities for advanced standing. In general, the awarding of credits may

result in a transcript where the assessment is summative, or in certification. RPL for credit takes place against the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria required specified for a qualification or part-qualification.

- vi. RPL may provide alternative access for those who do not meet the prerequisites for admission to a specific programme or course.
 - vii. RPL for access or advanced standing alone will not necessarily lead to certification, but will allow the candidate to either enter the programme of learning, or to fast-track to modules/levels not yet achieved at a level at which s/he is deemed sufficiently competent to cope.
12. SA Payroll further confirms that the implementation of RPL, purpose dependent and within a predefined context, may be undertaken at any given point of the learning and recognition process:
- i. RPL for credits towards a qualification
 - ii. RPL for access to a qualification
 - iii. RPL for advanced standing within a qualifications pathway
 - iv. RPL for career progression, including recruitment, selection and placement
 - v. RPL for registration with professional bodies and regulatory authorities
13. SA Payroll records that the following principles of RPL are common irrespective of the form of RPL that will be implemented within its industry scope:
- i. the focus will be on what has been learned and not on how or where learning was obtained;
 - ii. credit will awarded for learning through experience and not for experience alone;
 - iii. learning is made explicit through assessment and/or other methods to explore the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills and competencies required for success in further learning and access to employment;
 - iv. candidate guidance and support, the preparation of evidence and the development of an appropriate combination of teaching-learning, mentoring and assessment approaches are core to RPL practice; and
 - v. notwithstanding the above, in general, RPL will be considered to be a developmental process, and not an end in itself.

Policy for RPL

14. SA Payroll Association notes that
- i. This policy will constitute the regulatory framework for the advancement of RPL within the SA Payroll environment and sector.
 - ii. All SA Payroll accredited and registered providers of education and training p, including workplaces, are required to report on its RPL implementation;
 - iii. All SA Payroll designations and qualifications will make provision for entry level requirements to enable candidates to access the qualification or part-qualification through RPL.

- iv. SA Payroll will provide and facilitate enabling agreements within its member and stakeholder base to enhance effective progression and implementation of RPL practices and services in and across different learning and qualification and or designation pathways.

Quality Assurance

15. SA Payroll Association confirms that
 - i. The concept of quality in RPL needs to include quality indicators such as acceptability to stakeholders, fitness for purpose, transparency, and fair consequences.
 - ii. Quality assurance of RPL will include the establishment of and adherence to policies, processes, and assessment practices that ensure that the knowledge, skills and value of individual learners are recognized and validated so that they can successfully engage in the subjects and levels of learning that contribute meaningfully to their educational and/or employment goals.

Resourcing RPL

16. SA Payroll Association will facilitate and provide guidance in respect of
 - i. The direct and indirect human and financial capacity needed to build a sustainable and mainstream RPL system;
 - ii. Funding models and access to available funding in the education and skills development systems for RPL to be delivered through public and private provisioning.
 - iii. Government and other forms of subsidisation of RPL programmes and services.
 - iv. RPL funding costs, sustainability, fairness and reasonable of cost and provide for industry rack rates.
 - v. Scope for the sharing of facilities, staff and expertise across the RPL system and education and training institutions in a sustainable way.
 - vi. RPL candidates' "opportunity costs" (such as loss of income while undergoing RPL)
 - vii. Training and up-skilling of RPL practitioners must be prioritised.
 - viii. National RPL support and research.

Criteria for RPL

17. SA Payroll will adhere to the following criteria in respect of RPL:
 - i. The implementation of RPL in accordance with overarching and regulating policies and frameworks on RPL as prescribed by SAQA, QCTO, CHE or any quality council governing its sector and designations;
 - ii. Compliance with SAQA regulations and governing criteria for the recognition of professional bodies and the registration of professional designations.
 - iii. Include, as an initial requirement for attainments of its professional designations, an RPL route.

- iv. Collaborate with the SAQA, the Quality Councils, a RPL Centre or Institute and the relevant providers to advance the mainstreaming of RPL.
18. SA Payroll will ensure that providers registered or accredited to offer CPD or any training within its sector, adheres to the following in respect of RPL:
- i. Implementation of RPL in accordance with this policy and the overarching SAQA policy and any other Quality Council within which it operates.
 - ii. Confirm and retain its accreditation with the relevant Quality Council(s)
 - iii. In the case of private providers that offer qualifications and/or part qualifications located in the higher education and general and further education and training sub-frameworks , confirm its registration with either the Department of Basic Education or Higher Education and Training is also required
 - iv. Collaborate with the SAQA, the QCs and RPL Centres or Institute to advance the mainstreaming of RPL.
 - v. Command sufficient staff capacity to deliver quality RPL
 - vi. Have counseling and support services to assist potential candidates
 - vii. Have effective administrative and logistical systems
 - viii. Have a fee structure wherein RPL costs less than fulltime study towards the same credits for the corresponding formal qualification or part-qualification
 - ix. Develop an information management system that meets the requirements of the relevant QC, the NLRD, and other relevant government information management systems.
 - x. Have systems and procedures to ensure the professional registration of and continued professional development of RPL practitioners