



**Policy for the  
implementation of  
Recognition of  
Prior Learning (RPL)  
Policy**

**25 June 2014**

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## **Table of Contents**

List of Acronyms.....	4
Glossary of terms .....	5
1. Preamble.....	7
2. Purpose.....	7
3. Legislative and regulatory framework .....	7
4. Audience and applicability .....	8
5. The Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework .....	8
6. Standards for qualifications on the OQSF.....	8
7. RPL within the OQSF .....	8
8. Underlying principles for the implementation of RPL.....	9
9. Language of assessment .....	10
10. Responsibilities for the implementation of the RPL policy .....	10
11. Complaints and Appeals .....	12
12. Quality assurance and monitoring of policy implementation .....	12

## List of Acronyms

AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
QC	Quality Council
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDPs	Skills Development Providers
SETAs	Sector Education and Training Authorities

## Glossary of terms

Access	An entry to education and training of a particular qualification or part qualification or entry to a final external summative assessment.
Assessment	The process of collecting evidence of learner's work to measure and make judgements about the competence or non-competence of specified National Qualifications Framework occupational standards or qualifications and part qualifications.
Assessor	A person who is registered by the relevant AQP in accordance with established criteria to conduct internal and/or external assessments for registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications.
Candidate	A person whose performance is being assessed by an assessor registered with relevant institution.
Credit	The value given within a learning programme for achieved learning.
Informal learning	Learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life or leisure.
Formal learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such. Formal learning leads to the awarding of a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF.
Learning outcomes	A statement of measurable learning that describes what a candidate should know and/or be able to do as a result of learning.
Learning	The acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in a particular occupation or trade.
Monitoring	A continuous process of the review of quality that can be conducted internally and /or externally to recommend quality improvements.
Part Qualification	An assessed unit of learning that is registered or to be registered as part of qualification on the NQF with a clearly defined purpose.
Professional body	anybody of expert practitioners in an occupational field and includes an occupational body.

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)	Principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and /or skills of a person are made visible and are assessed for the purposes of certification, alternative access and admission and future learning and development.
RPL practitioner	A person that functions in one or more aspects of RPL provision, including policy development, advising, portfolio course design and facilitation, assessment and moderation, administration, monitoring and evaluation, research and development.
Skills Development Providers	A body which delivers learning programmes which culminate in specified registered NQF occupational standards and qualifications and part qualifications and manages the internal assessment thereof.
Work experience	Activities undertaken in the workplace, where acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes are related to tasks, processes and outcomes of a particular occupation.

## **1. Preamble**

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2010 in terms of section 26G of the Skills Development Act of 1998 as a juristic person.

The QCTO acknowledges that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a fundamental tenet of the NQF and provides for access, progression, support and career guidance for learners at all levels in formal education and training as well as workplace.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process by which individuals who had gained skills and knowledge through informal, non-formal or experiential learning can be assessed, recognised and awarded credits for such learning if it meets the requirements of an NQF registered qualification or part qualification. Individuals deserve credit for their competences and skills even if these have been gained through informal education or have been acquired in the course of their working lives or in participation in society and community activities outside formal places of learning. RPL provides formal recognition for knowledge or skills gained on the job or as a result of other informal or unstructured learning experiences.

## **2. Purpose**

The QCTO policy for the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides for the implementation of RPL for qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF)

## **3. Legislative and regulatory framework**

In terms of the National Qualifications Act (Act 67 of 2008), QCTO is the Quality Council for trades and Occupations as provided for in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1998

In terms of Section 27(h) (ii), QCTO must develop and implement policy and criteria for Assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Accumulation and Transfer for the qualifications and part qualification on the sub-framework.

The QCTO RPL Policy must be read in conjunction with the SAQA National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (March 2013) and the QCTO Assessment Policy (19 March 2014)

The White Paper for Post-School Education (November 2013) explicitly states that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) remains a key approach to redressing past injustices and recognising competence gained through practical workplace learning and experience. It further states that RPL will be applied more widely especially for young adults who wish to access programmes in colleges

## **4. Audience and applicability**

This RPL policy constitutes an overarching quality assurance framework for the provisioning of RPL, to be implemented by all RPL practitioners, skills development providers, assessment centres and workplaces, accredited by the QCTO and approved by relevant AQPs, SETAs and recognised Professional Bodies. It is applicable to all occupational qualifications, part qualifications, trades and professional designations registered on the OQSF

## **5. The Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework**

The Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF) is one of the three sub-frameworks that comprise the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The OQSF sets out the range of occupational qualification types in occupational education that may be awarded to mark the achievement of learning outcomes that have been appropriately assessed.

## **6. Standards for qualifications on the OQSF**

Currently, the occupational qualification standard is determined by two elements. One is the design specification for the occupational qualification, which is realised through its supporting curriculum. The other is the design specification of the assessment strategies and tools (both formative and external summative assessment). Evaluation and monitoring of the manner in which the curriculum is delivered and the assessment strategy is implemented supports the standard.

External integrated summative assessment is an integral and critical component of the QCTO's quality assurance system.

The External Integrated Summative Assessment;

- covers the three components for all qualifications on the OQSF viz. The Knowledge, Practical and Workplace components.
- ensures consistency and credibility of the assessment of occupational qualifications, trades and part qualifications.
- will be conducted using nationally standardised assessment instruments developed by the relevant AQP and quality assured by the QCTO

## **7. RPL within the OQSF**

The qualifications and part qualifications in the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework cover a variety of contexts. This policy recognises that candidates might seek RPL for various reasons and depending on various contexts. There are two main forms of RPL which reflect the different purposes and different processes within which RPL takes place.

- a) RPL for access: Provides an alternative access route into a programme of learning/qualification for those who do not meet the formal minimum requirements for admission. RPL for access applies to learning programmes offered by an accredited education institution, Skills Development provider or workplace based training provider.



- b) RPL for credit: To provide for the formal award of credits for, or towards a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.

The qualifications on the OQSF sub-framework are occupational and comprise Knowledge, Practical and Workplace experience components. These qualifications would therefore require a formal teaching and learning environment, a practical /simulation environment as well as actual workplace experience. The knowledge and skills are assessed through a formal external integrated summative assessment component. The Assessment Quality Partner must also design and implement a tool to conduct Recognition of Prior Learning at external summative assessment stage to support the learners that might have difficulties to seat for formal external integrated summative assessment.

Within the context of the OQSF, the recognition of prior learning is the evaluation and acknowledgement of the knowledge and skills that a candidate has gained to enable access to:

- Qualifications on the OQSF
- The External Integrated Summative Assessment.

## **8. Underlying principles for the implementation of RPL**

RPL processes must:

- a) be fair, reliable, valid, ethical and transparent
- b) be consistent across time, place, role players and respond to a non-sectoral demand led
- c) model
- d) use methodologies that are fit-for-purpose and reflect a consistent level of higher cognitive
- e) challenge
- f) avoid unfair exclusion
- g) empower potential learners by correctly placing them in formal and non-formal training
- h) programmes at level which will be to their maximum advantage
- i) recognise the diversity of knowledge, skills and learning styles and provide holistic and
- j) flexible assessment
- k) provide educational opportunities for life-long learning
- l) meet the quality standards of a particular qualification or part qualification
- m) impress upon candidates that there is no RPL without learning
- n) ensure that evidence assessment practices include on the job observation.

## 9. Language of assessment

In order to address issues of social justice, RPL may target candidates who may not be fluent in the mainstream language. There are occupations that do not necessarily need one to be fluent in the mainstream language. This would necessitate support of the candidate in a familiar language. The aim is to ensure that candidates:

- are not disadvantaged from enrolling for RPL because they are unable to express their knowledge and skills in the mainstream language;
- are assisted by translators and interpreters where necessary;
- portfolios are translated, transcribed and professionally presented as possible.

## 10. Responsibilities for the implementation of the RPL policy

### 10.1. Roles and responsibilities of the QCTO

The QCTO will:

- 10.1.1 monitor and evaluate the implementation of RPL within the OQSF including the development and implementation of standardised approaches where appropriate
- 10.1.2 foster close working relationship with professional bodies in and across the sub-frameworks where appropriate, to facilitate RPL
- 10.1.3 support and monitor the training of RPL advisers, facilitators, assessors, moderators and administrators ensure consistency in the application of RPL policies by providers and delegated bodies ( where relevant)
- 10.1.4 monitor the RPL admission rates of providers and make this information public in an appropriate format, while maintaining the strictest confidentiality with respect to individual candidates and individual institutions

### 10.2. Roles and responsibilities of education institutions and skills development providers

The education institutions and skills development providers must:

- 10.2.1 seek accreditation from the QCTO
- 10.2.2 progressively develop and enhance capacity to implement RPL in accordance with this policy
- 10.2.3 ensure that they have the necessary staff capacity to deliver RPL services and programmes
- 10.2.4 ensure effective planning and funding for RPL administrative and logistical systems to support all programmes and services

- 10.2.5 put systems and procedures in place to incentivise and support the registration and continuing professional development of RPL practitioners
- 10.2.6 provide advice, counselling and support services to assist RPL candidates prior to during and after RPL processes
- 10.2.7 establish an appeal process for RPL candidates to engage with RPL- related judgements

### **10.3. Roles and responsibilities of recognised professional bodies**

The recognised professional bodies must:

- 10.3.1. collaborate with SAQA, the Quality Councils and the relevant providers to incentivise and advance quality RPL provisioning in the sector
- 10.3.2. progressively develop and enhance their capacity to initiate and support RPL provision in accordance with this policy.

### **10.4. Roles and responsibilities of RPL practitioners**

The RPL practitioners must:

- 10.4.1 adhere to the requirements as set out in this policy and as determined by the relevant bodies and governance structures, which may include a Quality Council, a workplace and a professional body
- 10.4.2 meet professional requirements, including the participation in continuing professional development activities, to be developed and agreed with the community of RPL practitioners, relevant bodies and governance structures through the national coordination of RPL as set out in this policy

### **10.5. Roles and responsibilities of RPL candidates**

The candidates must:

- 10.5.1 accept co-responsibility as an equal partner in the RPL process
- 10.5.2 expect to be treated without unfair discrimination
- 10.5.3 respect the process and procedures of institutions and workplaces

## 11. Complaints and Appeals

- a) Complaints about the RPL and assessment process by learners should be lodged at the accredited Educational Institution or Skills Development Provider (or its approved Site).
- b) The procedure is to be decided by the provider institution, but the candidate has a right to know what procedure is to be followed.
- c) The notice of an appeal must state the grounds on which the applicant is seeking the appeal.

## 12. Quality assurance and monitoring of policy implementation

RPL is part of the overall quality assurance system and quality criteria that applies to quality assurance of taught programmes. Quality assurance of RPL is manifested by the establishment and adherence to policies, standards, processes and associated practises that ensure that the knowledge, skills and values of learners are recognised and validated so that they can successfully engage in further learning that contributes meaningfully to their educational and/or employment goals.

Learners, staff and external stakeholders should form part of ongoing evaluation exercises. In particular, learners should be encouraged to provide feedback on the entire RPL process on completion of the personal RPL undertaking. Institutions need to monitor and adapt the RPL services and assessments in order to make the process more effective and efficient and to ensure that the RPL process is in line with national standards and developmental objectives.

In the quality assurance of RPL, standardisation can only take place between similar types of RPL. An effort must be made to allow standardised practises to grow within sectors, as one approach does not necessarily work across different contexts. Quality assurance of RPL must be undertaken with explicit intention to protect the integrity of the processes and outcomes concerned.

Monitoring, evaluation and verification are important elements in the ongoing development of the RPL process in relation to the quality of assessment. This process is ongoing, and monitoring the quality of the entire RPL process is as important as monitoring the outcomes of the RPL assessment.

**NOTE: This policy will be reviewed annually.**