Policy title	Policy Recognition of Prior Learning	Year	2018
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Signature			

PURPOSE OF THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY

This policy provides general rules and guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT). The policy supports the aims of the National Qualifications Framework, as articulated in the National Policy for Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (SAQA, 2013). RPL is aimed at redress, in particular for those disadvantaged by South Africa's previous government but also for those who may have missed out on the opportunity to achieve a qualification. RPL also addresses the scarce and critical skills gap in South Africa by enabling RPL candidates to access learning or to achieve a qualification. Thus, RPL enables access to the knowledge and skills needed to work in the fast growing sport and fitness sector where competent employees are critical for the growth of the profession and its industry (Skills Development Act, 1998, Skills Development Amendment Act, 2008). According to SAQA, there are two main forms of RPL which reflect the different purposes and the different processes within which RPL takes place:

RPL for access to a learning programme

RPL aims to provide access to **eta** programmes, through the recognition of prior knowledge and skills of a person. This policy of recognition enables alternative access and admission, recognition of learning and the potential of certification (SAQA, 2013).

RPL can grant access to a programme, or an advanced standing/exemption from modules that constitute part of a programme that leads to an accredited qualification (CHE, 2013)

This policy guides decisions about access for those who do not meet the formal entry requirements for admission. RPL for access can be applied to learning programmes.[1]

RPL and enabling credit accumulation and transfer (CAT)

This policy provides for the recognition of previously achieved credits to enable exemption from already achieved learning.

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[1] At the time of publication of this policy an RPL assessment policy is in process which caters for the assessment of RPL candidates who do not meet recognised admission criteria. Refer to the RPL Assessment for access policy that has been developed for **eta**, in collaboration with NO:ME Psychometrics and Consulting PTY Ltd. This is work in progress and staff are being trained in 2018.

RPL Assessment

RPL assessment may take place at a diagnostic, formative or summative level, with the aim being to create opportunities for access to learning or exemption from achieved learning (SAQA, 2013). Not all rules of combination allow for the achievement of a **whole qualification** through RPL but, where combination rules allow, this policy provides guidance for the achievement of whole qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub Framework (OQSF). The policy also provides guidelines for the recognition of achieved credits to enable access to education and exemption from prior learning through credit accumulation and transfer (CAT). **eta** campus Managers and Academic Heads should reference this policy to provide guidance and advice to RPL candidates. According to SAQA (2013) the following elements ensure a holistic approach to RPL:

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 for experience alone.
c. Prior learning is made explicit through assessment and/or other methods that engage the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired.
d. Candidate guidance and support, the preparation of evidence and the development of an appropriate combination of further teaching and learning, mentoring and assessment approaches are core to RPL practice.

> (SAQA, National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning, 2013)

Thus, in terms of **eta** processes a process of RPL must ensure the following:

- Evidence of any prior learning is evaluated against the outcomes required for a specific qualification; and
- Credits are awarded for such learning if it meets the requirements of the qualification.

RPL PROCESS

The RPL process allows for the following:

- Identifying what the RPL candidate knows and can do;

- <u>Matching</u> the candidate's skills, knowledge and experience to the admission requirements or, if relevant, the outcomes and assessment criteria of a qualification;
- <u>Assessing</u> the candidate's submitted evidence against explicit standards;
- <u>Crediting</u> the candidate for skills, knowledge and experience learnt through previous formal and or informal learning (where rules of combination allow in a qualification. Or, exempting candidates from already achieved learning; and
- <u>Access to a programme or awarding a qualification</u> if assessment criteria are met.

Evaluating prior informal and non-formal learning

In assessing evidence for RPL, the context of the anticipated learning, and the context of the person being evaluated is taken into account. Evidence of prior learning should enable decisions to be made about admission or, at times about achievement of a qualification. Therefore, the **eta** assessment policy and its procedures apply to assessment for RPL.

NB: Full qualifications on the higher education qualifications sub framework cannot be achieved solely through the process of RPL (CHE, 2016). The achievement of full qualifications through RPL is only possible in unit standards-based qualifications registered on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework and ONLY for qualifications which indicate that such qualifications can be achieved through RPL.

RPL CATEGORIES

RPL applicants are categorised according to the nature of their application and the type of previous learning and it is important to read *each programme's admission criteria in the Admission and Selection Policy in conjunction with this RPL policy.* Assessment of RPL evidence is governed and guided by the **eta** Assessment and Moderation policies and these should be referenced when conducting RPL. RPL Assessment guides are provided for assessors to evaluate the quality of evidence submitted by category 1 candidates.

To advise candidates appropriately, it is important to determine whether they wish to have current knowledge and skills recognised for the achievement of a registered occupational qualification (category 1 and category 2) or if they wish to have prior learning recognised

and credits to be acknowledged and learning exempted for another programme (category 3 and 4).

The following definitions are intended to help the RPL advisor to guide an RPL candidate accordingly. Check the RPL procedures and guidelines for full details on how to manage each type of candidate.

Category 1: Recognition of informal, work-based learning

Category 1 is only applicable for occupationally based qualifications or part qualifications that are registered on the Occupational Qualifications Framework (OQSF). Category 1 cannot be applied to higher education qualifications that are registered on the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQSF).

Candidates who have workplace experience and who have completed formal or informal learning are eligible for the Category 1 RPL process. *This RPL category is not available for candidates who do not have relevant workplace experience*. Category 1 candidates are required to submit a portfolio of evidence (PoE) containing their current direct and indirect evidence for assessment against a qualifications assessment criteria, in order to achieve a unit standard, part qualification or whole qualification.

Refer: RPL checklist and Assessment guide for candidates.

Assessment of Category 1 candidates: All category 1 candidates must follow the most current **eta** Guidelines for RPL, first completing the online RPL checklist. Evidence is submitted to **eta** and evaluated against the assessment criteria of the qualification they wish to achieve, using an **eta** RPL Assessment Guide. If a candidate's evidence does not meet all the criteria of the qualification, they will be required to submit additional evidence or, in some cases, to complete additional learning and assessment. Studies for additional learning can be completed through **eta** Distance Learning or through attendance at an **eta** campus.

Refer: RPL Assessment Guide for assessors.
Refer: Assessment policy for rules relating to re-submission

__Note__: It is important to check the qualification rules to ensure whether a qualification is allowed to be achieved whole or in part. Some allow for the achievement of a whole qualification and others do not.

Category 1 applicants apply to **eta** Special Projects <u>only</u>.

 Category 2: Recognition of formal learning for the achievement of qualification

Category 2 can only be applied for the recognition of credits for unit standards-based qualifications registered on the OQSF. It also only applies where the curriculum of a certificate is *embedded in the curriculum of a national diploma* and is delivered in the first year of the programme. For example, a category 2 candidate may have enrolled for a level 5 national diploma with 240 credits and wishes to exit the programme after one year of study. Achieved credits may be recognised *as long as they are at the same level and represent the learning required for a level 5 national certificate*. If candidates first year of study in a diploma is not the same as that required for the certificate, the credits may still enable the achievement of certain unit standards. Achieved credits can also be recognised and transferred to other programmes. Check the Programme Plan of each programme and consult with the Assessment Manager at CAD.

<u>Assessment of Category 2 candidates</u>: Category 2 candidates submit results for their achieved modules, indicating credits and NQF level so that the RPL advisor can determine whether they qualify for the achievement of the qualification being requested. There are administrative costs for this process.

Category 2 applicants apply to the **eta** campus where they commenced their studies **or** to **eta** Distance Learning if applicable

 Category 3: Recognition of formal learning, credit transfer and exemption

A category 3 candidate may be an **eta** student or graduate or a candidate from another accredited institution. The candidate would like their prior learning to be recognised, enabling exemption from modules or levels of study, and recognition of achieved credits.

The candidate must provide proof of their achieved credits in the form of an official transcript of results which indicates achieved credits and their NQF level. For advisors to make a decision about credit transfer and exemption from learning, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Exempted learning is within the field or in the same subject matter; e.g. credits at NQF level 6, relating to business management from a Bachelor of Commerce may be recognised for exemption from a business management module at NQF level 6 in a Diploma in Sport & Recreation Management.
- If prior learning is recognised, the candidate is exempt from modules that their prior learning is deemed to match. Candidates complete the remaining credits in the programme, to achieve their qualification.
- **Horizontal transfer of credits**: achieved credits can be **exempted** when at the same NQF level as the programme (or modules within a programme) for which students are applying. For example, candidates with a Certificate in Personal Training at level 5 (86 credits) are exempted from achieved learning, transferring credits into a National Diploma in Fitness (240 credits, level 5.) As same unit standards and their credits are contained in the ND, students only need to complete the remaining credits.
- **Vertical transfer of credits**: achieved credits at a lower level can be recognised as allowing access into programmes at a higher level e.g. a student with a Higher Certificate at Level 5 can enter a level 6 programme.
- **Exemption of credits** cannot exceed 50% of the total credits of the programme that candidates are entering e.g. if a programme is a total of 360 credits, no more than 180 credits can be exempted from learning.
- No more than 50% of the credits of a **completed qualification** may be transferred to another qualification e.g. 50% of level 5 credits from a higher certificate can be transferred to a 360 credit, level 6 diploma. Thus 60, level 5 credits are transferred and exempted and the remaining 300 credits of the diploma need to be completed.
- No more than 10% of a cohort of students may be admitted through RPL.

Assessment of Category 3 candidates: Category 3 candidates are exempted from credits already achieved and such modules are indicated as exempted through RPL in the

Student Information System (SIS). Students are then required to complete the learning and assessment of all remaining credits.

Category 3 applicants apply to an **eta** campus or to **eta** Distance Learning to complete their studies.

*Refer to **eta** Procedure for RPL and CAT*

Category 4: Recognition of advanced standing and informal prior learning

Category 4 candidates are those who wish to access a programme and want prior *informal* learning to be recognised or exempted. This includes candidates of 'advanced standing'; a candidate who may be granted admission to studies at a higher level than his/her prior level of learning would have allowed (SAQA, 2013). For example, advanced standing admission can apply to a candidate who did not matriculate with the necessary grade 12 pass but now has life and work experience. Such learning may be recognised for access to a programme. Category 4 may also apply to candidates who hold a certain level of learning e.g. level 5 and wish to be exempt from level 6 modules within a programme based on their prior work-place or life experience.

Category 4 Candidates may also have some formal learning credits that can be acknowledged but their prior learning is mostly from the workplace. For example, as part of their workplace training, a candidate may have completed an accredited and credit-bearing module on business management. This can be considered in the submission to enable recognition of such learning, acknowledgement of credits and exemption from the same module on an **eta** programme.

Assessment of Category 4 candidates: Workplace experience alone is not a strong predictor of academic success, whereas cognitive ability is (Kotzé & Griessel, April 2008). Therefore, if cognitive ability is more of a factor than experience, age is not a factor. Thus, **eta** does not discriminate against candidates based on their youth or senior age. We have now agreed an assessment process with NO:ME and RPL assessment combines their psychometric tests with **eta** interviews and assessment of portfolios of evidence. This

RPL policy needs to be read in conjunction with the new RPL Assessment policy (produced by NO:ME in collaboration with **eta**).

Category 4 RPL candidates can access to a programme. If RPL assessment meets criteria, then candidates can be accepted to their learning programme.

The total of RPL candidates may not exceed 10% of the intake for a programme.

Category 4 applicants apply to an **eta** campus for contact programmes or to **eta** Special Projects for distance learning programmes.

Important: all RPL candidates and **eta** advisor must refer to the current RPL Instructions and checklist. RPL advisors should follow the RPL Procedure. Assessors must follow the RPL Assessment policy and the RPL Assessment Guide for guidelines on assessment.

DETERMINING CURRENCY OF LEARNING AND ELIGIBILITY FOR RPL

Previously achieved learning is considered current if achieved within 3-years of an assessment or exemption application. If applicants completed their course *less than 3-years* prior to their application, their qualification or modules achieved will be recognised. Proof is required in the form of certified copies of certificates or transcript of results.

If applicants completed their learning more than 3-years prior to their application but they have current work experience, this can be recognised through the RPL process, and the relevant category. Proof of workplace experience is required in the form of a signed affidavit from their supervisor, detailing the nature of work conducted.

If applicants successfully completed their course more than 3-years prior to their application but have NO valid (they may have worked in banking and wish to qualify in sport coaching) or have no current work experience, they may still be eligible for RPL. However, they will be required to submit evidence of their knowledge in the form of assessments (theoretical and practical).

Assessors should check the current Study Guide and Assessment Guide for details of the prescribed assessments. This candidate is not eligible for RPL category 1. Proof of previous qualifications is required in the form of certified copies of transcripts of results and/or certificates.

RPL APPLICATIONS AND FEES

Admission: Refer to the Admission and Selection policy in conjunction with this policy

Registration: Refer to the **eta** Registration policy for registration rules and guidelines. To determine the relevant fees per category, refer to the **eta** course fees for the year of application.

Fees for modules: Check the current **eta** price list for module fees due for category 3 or 4.

RPL PROCEDURE AND PRICES

- Refer to **eta Procedure** for guidelines on the management of RPL candidates and access to **eta** programmes.
- Refer to the current **eta** price list for module fees and RPL fees

References

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