

## ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

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### PREAMBLE

These guidelines have been formulated to achieve an acceptable level of consistency in the implementation of recognition of prior learning throughout the University which is consistent with the principles, policy and procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL) set out in the policy document for RPL of SAQA.

The procedures used for the assessment of prior learning should ensure that the academic staff carrying out the assessment have a detailed knowledge of the module/s subject(s) in which credit is sought, and personal expertise in, or access to advise on prior learning assessment methods.

The requirement that RPL assessments are recorded in the same manner as conventional assessment outcomes, is to prevent a situation, in contexts where non-formal learning is viewed as inferior to conventional learning contexts, where RPL assessment is not accepted by providers as a legitimate reflection of a candidate's knowledge, skills and competencies. This highlights the importance of the systemic quality management of RPL systems, so that all stakeholders will have faith in RPL assessment across the board.

### SECTION A: POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE OF RPL

RPL is a way of recognising what individuals already know and can do. RPL is based on the premise that people learn both inside and outside formal learning structures.

While the framework and objectives of the NQF contextualises the implementation of RPL, it is the *National Standards Bodies Regulations No 18787 of 28 March 1998* that specifically refer to RPL. In defining RPL, the regulations state that:

*"recognition of prior learning means the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a candidate howsoever obtained against the learning outcomes required for a*

*specified qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements”.*

Furthermore, in terms of the requirements for the registration of qualifications, section 8(1)(a) of the regulations states that a qualification shall:

*“indicate in the rules governing the award of the qualification that the qualification may be achieved in whole or in part through the recognition of prior learning, which concept includes but is not limited to learning outcomes achieved through formal, informal and non-formal learning and work experience.”*

In outcomes-based education and training, credentialing is not entirely dependent on time spent on learning. The emphasis is rather on candidates' demonstration of competence which makes it possible for the recognition of prior experience and learning. Once a candidate knows what is required and feel ready, they can present themselves for assessment and/or submit the necessary evidence of having achieved competence in a number of ways. It is this element of the OBET system that allows for the acceptance, assessment and credentialing of prior learning. (SAQA Guidelines, 1999: 22.)

### **1.1 Eligibility to apply**

RPL is only available to candidates who plan to enrol at the VUT for modules/ programmes offered at the VUT. RPL will normally be assessed prior to or at the time of enrolment for the programme.

All applications for RPL must be lodged prior to the commencement of study for the programme but no later than 10 (ten) working days prior to the commencement of the semester in which the programme /module(s) will be studied. Applications received after that date would not necessarily be considered for credit in the same semester.

## **2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

The South African qualification framework as well as the following consultative documents acts as the standardised determinant of the level and credit of the learning:

National Standards Bodies Regulations No 18787 of 28 March 1998

Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies Regulations No 19231 of 8 September 1998

### **3. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

#### **Assessment**

A process of gathering and weighing evidence in order to determine whether candidates have demonstrated outcomes specified in unit standards and/or qualifications registered on the NQF.

#### **Moderation**

A process of ensuring that assessments have been conducted in line with agreed practices, and are fair, reliable and valid.

#### **Verification**

A process by which the recommendations from the provider about the award of credits or qualifications to candidates are checked.

#### **Evidence facilitation**

A process by which candidates are assisted to produce and organise evidence for the purpose of assessment. It is not an essential part of every assessment process, but is useful in many contexts, including PRL.

#### **RPL officer**

A person appointed and trained within a department to provide candidates with relevant programme and RPL information. This can, but does not have to be, the head of department. RPL officers are not responsible for consultation or lecturing of RPL candidates. RPL officers are only responsible for the appointment of assessors for the candidate and to facilitate the assessment process.

#### **Judgement**

The process whereby the assessor makes an informed decision as to whether the intended outcomes have been achieved based on the assessment evidence presented.

### **4 PATHWAYS OF RPL**

There should be a common means of assigning value to both the candidate's previous qualification and the target qualification. The VUT will use the principles of RPL to assess two broad kinds of prior learning for credit:

#### **4.1 Recognition of prior accredited learning. (Formal RPL)**

The current qualification can be successfully completed through recognition of unit standards, modules or qualifications obtained at accredited institutions.

## 4.2 Recognition of prior experiential learning. (Work experience, Informal, Non-formal)

Recognition of prior experiential learning (work experience) is based on the principle of matching previous learning with the learning outcomes of a target qualification and by this means, 'translating' the prior learning into the 'levels and credits' of the qualification framework in the formal system. This refers to learning acquired in an 'uncredentialed' context, such as through work experience or through life experience.

4.2.1 RPL in this context can be used at the VUT for the following purposes:

- Entry to a qualification
- Accreditation and exemption of modules in a qualification
- For entry into a post-graduate qualification. Should the candidate apply for RPL to do further studies, "status" can be awarded for the preceding qualification.

4.2.2 Every programme should have a standard structured means for the assessment of individual candidates against the outcomes of modules and the exit-level outcomes of the qualification on a case-by-case basis. Accreditation can only be done on modular basis. The assessor decides as to whether the candidate has met most of the outcomes to at least a 50% level upon which the candidate can be offered placement at the VUT.

4.2.3 RPL results will be noted as exemptions for credit transfers and should indicate whether the candidate was competent or requires further assistance. In the case where the candidate requires further assistance necessary opportunities need to be created to allow the candidate to be competent, e.g. resubmission of portfolios, *viva voce* examination, and supplementary examination. In cases where the candidate is still unsuccessful, recommendations must be made to the candidate to either accept to be RPLed at a lower level or consider doing some additional modules that will qualify the candidate for desired placement.

4.2.4 The assessment evidence and procedure are subject to the moderation by independent moderators.

4.2.5 The general assessment policy of the VUT will apply to the assessment of RPL candidates.

## 5. OUTCOMES OF RPL

5.1 The RPL-officer will advise the candidate of the outcome of the RPL application at the conclusion of the process and confirm this in writing within 10 working days.

5.2 There are five possible outcomes of an RPL assessment:

5.2.1 **RPL granted in full.** Grant access to a diploma/degree/post graduate programme (Appendix B); or

5.2.2 **RPL granted in part.** Issue a "Result statement (Appendix A)" which outlines accredited competencies and/or modules recognised by the assessor. These may be used as credits toward gaining full or other qualifications at the VUT; or

5.2.3 **Access RPL.** Identification of the need for "bridging" in a particular programme; or

5.2.4 **RPL denied.** Inappropriate alignment against course requirements will result in no formal recognition by the assessor. Where RPL is not granted the assessor and/or moderator is required to document the candidate's learning gaps against specific learning outcomes of the subject on a RPL Assessment Report form; or

5.2.5 **Additional evidence required.** A request to supply further supporting documentation.

A potential candidate cannot, under any circumstance, submit a portfolio that was previously RPLed at VUT or any recognised institution for which credits were awarded. It is considered as a serious academic offence to attempt such and normal disciplinary procedures of the VUT shall apply.

## SECTION B: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

### 6. FEES AND FUNDING FOR RPL SERVICES

- 6.1. Where an applicant seeks to apply for RPL a non-refundable administration and processing fee will be necessary when lodging the application. Fees will be calculated in such a way as not to disadvantage the potential candidate.
- Services rendered should be the final arbiter of calculations of fees. Fees for assessment services will be charged.
- 6.2 This fee incorporates the following:
- Initial processing of application including administration and data entry;
  - Supply of RPL guidelines, assessment guidelines, competency outlines and competency elements;
  - Assessment of portfolio by RPL officer and assessor; and an interview (if required) for RPL assessment.
  - Moderation
  - Publication of results
- 6.3 The fees per module/programme for RPL assessments should be less than the cost of taking the module/programme on a full-time basis.

Candidates will be issued with a form, indicating the outcomes of the RPL assessment. Upon registration for further studies at the VUT, these results will be recorded as 'module exemptions' on the ITS database.

### 7. ROLE OF ASSESSOR

Although it can vary in its methodology and application, the primary focus of any RPL application process is to determine the following:

- Does the candidate possess the necessary knowledge to perform the required competencies?
- Does the candidate possess the necessary skills to perform the required competencies?
- Have candidates produced validated evidence that they have the required knowledge and skills?
- Assessors complete an assessment report that indicates the assessment plan, the evidence presented, the assessment outcome, and the suggestions for further learning in cases where gaps have been identified.

- All assessment activities, processes and documents are subject to moderation in accordance with the assessment regulations of the VUT.
- All RPL outcomes of non-formal learning should be approved by the faculty board.
- Candidates are informed of the final results of the assessment only after moderation and approval of the faculty board. This should be done within ten working days after the actual assessment.

## 8. ROLE OF THE CANDIDATE

- 8.1 It is the candidate's responsibility to prepare a portfolio.
- 8.2 The candidate has the right to a consultation session with the RPL officer to provide guidance on the assessment procedure.
- 8.3 The candidate has to submit the portfolio to the assessor with the accompanied form.
- 8.4 In general terms an evidence portfolio will consist of the following:
- Brief Resume outlining career, qualifications, work experience;
  - Completed and legible self-assessment checklists outlining experience and/or qualifications addressing the specific units of competence and elements of competency being applied for;
  - Certified copies of Certificates of Qualification, Statements of Attainment, Courses completed, etc;
  - Samples of work undertaken or projects completed relevant to the units of competence and elements of competency being applied for; and
  - Testimonial letters or reference material attesting to competence in relevant areas.
- 8.5.1 In addition to the above-mentioned documentation, the candidate might also be required to:
- attend a personal interview;
  - complete a practical exercise;
  - write a report;
  - undertake workplace observation;
  - complete a written/oral assessment.
- 8.6 Candidates have the right to appeal against both the process and outcomes of the RPL assessment, and appeal procedures must be implemented in a fair and transparent fashion.

## **9 MAXIMUM EXEMPTION**

- 9.1 The maximum amount of exemption granted based on all types of prior learning is no more than 50 percent of the programme except where specific arrangements for prior credentialed learning have been approved.
- 9.2 In the case of application for post-graduate studies, accreditation "status" can be granted by the faculty board, based on RPL evidence for the preceding qualification offered by another institution so as to afford the candidate the opportunity to pursue a post-graduate programme at the VUT
- 9.3 Accreditation can only be done on modular basis. The assessor decides as to whether the candidate has met most of the outcomes to at least 50% level upon which the candidate can be offered placement to VUT.
- 9.4 Candidates cannot be awarded diplomas and degrees at the VUT through RPL as there is a need to complete 50% of the mainstream requirements for the awarding of such qualifications.

## **10. PROCEDURE**

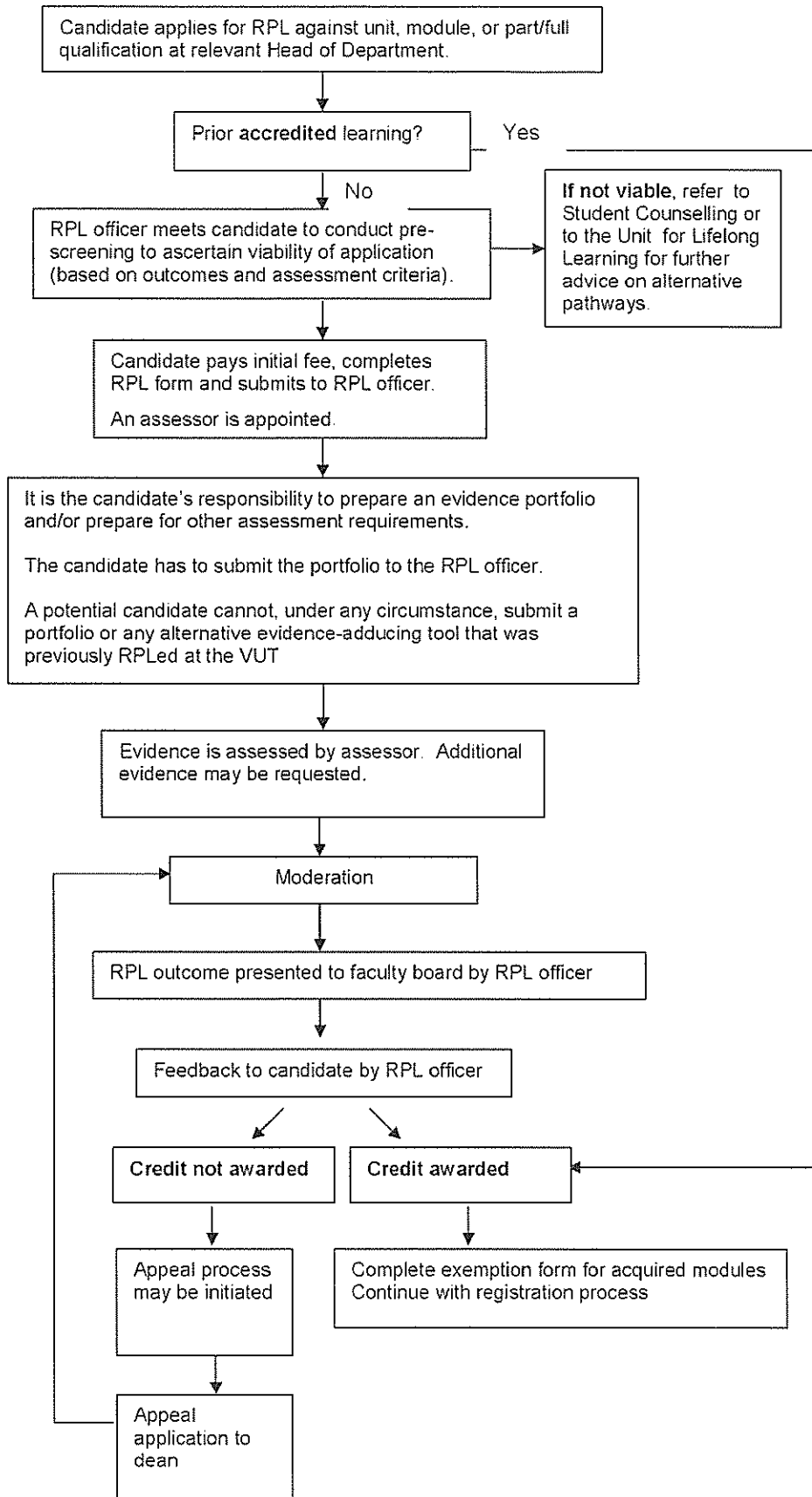
- 10.1 The candidate submits a written application, supported by a condensed motivation to apply for RPL against unit, module, or part/full qualification to the relevant Head of Department.
- 10.2 If the prior learning has been achieved through an **accredited pathway** and the application is with merit according to the judgement of the RPL officer, the candidate completes the exemption form, submits it to the RPL officer, who must submit it to the Assessment department.
- 10.3 If, according to the judgment of the RPL officer, the application is without merit, the applicant will be notified accordingly in which case the process is completed. The student can be referred to the Unit for Lifelong learning and/or to student/counselling. However, if the application has merit, the following steps will be followed:

- 11.3.1 An assessor is appointed by the RPL officer



- 10.3.2 The candidate has to prepare the evidence and submit it to the RPL-officer. The evidence is assessed and moderated. The RPL Officer submits the recommendation to the faculty board for approval.
- 10.3.3 The candidate is notified by the RPL officer of the outcome. Documentation should be submitted to the Assessment department.
- 10.4 A candidate has the right to appeal against the outcome.
- 10.4.1 The dean is responsible for any appeal against an unfavourable outcome only on procedural or academic grounds.
- 10.4.2 Appeals must be made in writing and lodged by the applicant within one week of receipt of initial advice of the assessment outcome.
- 10.4.3 An independent moderator will be appointed. Additional fees will be charged.
- 10.4.4 The outcome of the re-mark is final.

## FLOW CHART OF RPL PROCEDURE



**APPENDIX**

**Form A – Module exemption**

**Form B – Status recognition**



**VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**A. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING/EXEMPTION**

SURNAME AND INITIALS: ..... ID NUMBER: ..... STUDENT NR: .....

ADDRESS: .....

..... CODE: .....

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME ..... INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME NUMBER .....

Subject code	Name of subject	RPL Outcome	Signature Assessor	Comments (Specify by virtue of which module/unit standards/qualification)	Codes for RPL outcome: G - Granted N - Not granted A - Additional information required

HOD of instructional programme \_\_\_\_\_ Dean \_\_\_\_\_ Examination department \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Receipt Number	Date	Amount
Controlled	Date	

*Forms must be submitted by the relevant HOD the Examination department office only*



# VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## B. RPL Status-recognition

SURNAME AND INITIALS: ..... ID NUMBER: ..... STUDENT NR: .....

ADDRESS: .....

..... CODE: .....

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME ..... INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME NUMBER.....

Programme Code	Name of programme	RPL Outcome	Signature Assessor	Comments (Specify by virtue of which module/unit standards/qualification)	Codes for RPL outcome: G - Granted N - Not granted A - Additional information required

HOD of instructional programme \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Examination department \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Receipt Number	Date	Amount
Controlled	Date	

*Forms must be submitted by the relevant HOD the Examination department office only*

