



Current Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives in South Africa

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and RPL – what is RPL?

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008 and associated Acts for the three Quality Councils presents an NQF strengthened by 15 years of implementation. The original NQF objectives of systemic integration, access, mobility and progression, quality and redress remain – there is a renewed focus on goals of transparency and quality – and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) remains key.

What is RPL? RPL involves recognition of non-formal and informal learning gained outside formal learning, at work or in daily life. RPL processes can include guidance and counselling, transitioning activities, and extended preparation for assessment. Assessment, an integral feature of all forms of RPL, *does not exist in isolation* from a range of other mediation strategies. There are two main forms of RPL; both can place before/during/after learning:

RPL for access: To provide an alternative access route into a programme of learning for those who do not meet formal entry requirements.

RPL for credits: To provide for the awarding of credits for, or towards, a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF.

NEW Policy for the implementation of RPL

New *National Policy for the Implementation of RPL* has been developed by SAQA in collaboration with a democratically elected and representative national RPL Reference Group, on the basis of 15 years of experience in implementing and researching RPL. The policy enables RPL in the diverse NQF sub-frameworks. Qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NQF can be awarded in part or whole through RPL. RPL processes must be quality assured in line with national RPL policies. It is mandatory for providers to submit RPL records to the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), for analysis in strict confidentiality, to assess trends.

The new policy gives pointers for:

- Resourcing of RPL – who must pay for RPL
- Effective delivery of RPL
- Quality assurance of RPL so that it is highly respected across the board
- Rights and responsibilities of all role-players implementing/ experiencing RPL

National RPL Conference 2014, Johannesburg, 23-26 February 2014

SAQA is pleased to announce the National RPL Conference 2014 **Implementing RPL: Tried-and-tested, tools, templates**. The conference builds on the outcomes of the *National RPL Conference: Bridging and expanding existing islands of excellent practice* (Kopanong, Johannesburg, 2011) which focused on effective delivery models for RPL, credible quality assurance of RPL, and resourcing RPL – and all the work done since.

Purposes of the 2014 conference

- Understanding the new *Policy for implementation of RPL* and related RPL implementation strategies
- Sharing best RPL practices, delivery models, effective tools and templates, resourcing models, and other useful knowledge and experience to expand quality RPL within and across sectors

To participate in the National RPL Conference 2014 please RSVP via RPL2014@saqa.co.za

Ministerial RPL Task Team recommendations

Following SAQA's advice after the National RPL Conference 2011, the Minister of Higher Education and Training set up a Ministerial RPL Task Team to investigate barriers to systemic development of RPL. The Task Team's research and overview of legislation in South Africa that could potentially impact on RPL shows that in principle RPL could be conducted widely in the current system. There are some barriers which need systemic action.

Recommendations of the Ministerial RPL Task Team include:

- Creation of a National RPL Institute (a coordinating mechanism to achieve parts of the national RPL strategy including RPL research; strategic projects; a national database of RPL providers; advocacy; networking; disseminating leading practices; an RPL clearinghouse; evaluation of RPL; capacity building and professionalization of RPL practitioners)
- State and employer-driven funding of RPL
- Incremental quality development of RPL
- An overall goal of RPL embedded in education and training within 5-10 years
- High-level cross-cutting support

RPL initiatives up to and since 2011

RPL is implemented in almost all public Higher Education Institutions, in many SETAs, and by over 253 RPL providers. SAQA is currently assisting RPL in these sectors:

- **Agricultural sector:** RPL for agricultural workers (potentially 50,000)
- **Auto-motor artisans:** TETA-NAMB-BMW-Mercedes-Honda-Toyota-Ford collaboration for RPL for mechanics (project still being developed)
- **Correctional Services:** RPL for offender artisans (initial potential 40,000)
- **Department of Defence:** RPL for Military Veterans (potentially 20,000)
- **DPSA:** Coordination of RPL in public services (potentially 10,000)
- **Department of Social Development:** RPL for professionalization of Community Development Practitioners (potentially over 100,000)
- **Department of Transport (DoT):** RPL for staff in the DoT (500 candidates)
- **Education and Labour Relations Council (ELRC):** RPL for educators (potential reach: 10,000)
- **E-TV:** RPL for E-TV staff members (potentially 500 candidates)
- **Game Rangers:** Rhodes University-SANPARKS collaboration for rangers (potentially 10,000)
- **Hair care industry:** RPL for professionalization of practitioners (potentially 3000)
- **Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA):** RPL for psychologists (300 candidates)
- **Marine Industry Association South Africa (MIASA):** RPL for artisans (potentially 5000)
- **Medical Laboratory Scientists:** RPL policy and processes created (currently no candidates)
- **National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB):** 30 RPL pilots for artisans (initial potential 10,000)
- **Rand Water:** RPL for 100 artisans and 20 management staff members at Rand Water
- **Road Traffic Management Corporation:** RPL for Traffic Officers (1000 candidates)
- **State Information Technology Agency (SITA):** RPL for internal restructuring (potentially 300)
- **South African Police Services (SAPS):** RPL for musicians in the SAPS (400 candidates)
- **SAQA:** RPL for SAQA staff (project under development)
- **South African Sports Confederation (SASCOC):** Pilot for sports coaches (potentially 10,000)

SAQA's RPL publications

- Proceedings of the Colloquium on RPL for upgrading and up-skilling teachers in South Africa (SAQA 2010)
- National RPL Conference: Bridging and expanding existing islands of excellent practice – Book of Abstracts and Summaries (SAQA 2011)
- National RPL Conference: Bridging and expanding existing islands of excellent practice – Book of Full Papers (currently in draft form)
- Resolution and Working Document on RPL (SAQA 2011)
- Successful RPL cases (currently in draft form)
- National RPL Conference: Tried and Tested Tools and Templates (to be printed in February 2014)

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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in South Africa: What is it? What have we achieved? Where are we going?

Key LESSONS learned so far	POLICY PRIORITIES from the National RPL Conference 2011	Initiatives ACHIEVED since 2011	Implementation of National RPL Strategy
<p>Drivers/ needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a well-resourced integrated approach • RPL for employed and unemployed • RPL at all NQF levels • enabling partnerships for delivery • common understandings of RPL <p>For effective delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing successful models, tools, templates • advocacy • effective delivery structures • practitioner capacity development/ professionalization <p>For quality assurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national benchmarks • RPL fit-for-purpose • building RPL databases <p>For resourcing RPL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state-led/ state-guided initiatives • state and private funding • harmonisation of fees/ recognizing ability to pay <p>For development of a system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear guidance from DHET • leadership from SAQA • national RPL institute • RPL clearinghouse • effective funding, delivery, quality assurance, coordination 	<p>Quality assurance</p> <p>National coordination</p> <p>Resourcing</p> <p>Effective delivery</p>	<p>Ministerial RPL Task Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPL achievements to date • Status of RPL in sub-sectors • Funding for RPL • Legislation affecting RPL • RPL coordination models <p>New SAQA National Policy for the Implementation of RPL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After consulting with the Quality Councils • Assisted by an RPL Reference Group <p>Extensive RPL development and implementation work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 20 sectoral / organisational RPL cases <p>Implementation of RPL in most public HEIs, some SETAs, over 253 RPL providers</p> <p>Building of RPL databases and networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National RPL conferences 2011 • RPL publications 	<p>Implementation of SAQA's National RPL Policy</p> <p>National RPL Institute</p> <p>Strategic Projects (Provincial RPL hubs)</p> <p>Capacity development and professionalisation</p> <p>State and employer-driven funding model</p> <p>Incremental quality development National RPL Conference 2014</p>