QCTO Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy June 2026

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
AC	Assessment Centre
ARPL	Artisan Recognition of Prior Learning
DoL	Department of Labour
EISA	External Integrated Summative Assessment for occupational qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the OQSF
ELO	Exit Level Outcome
ERRP	South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan
FISA	Final Integrated Supervised Assessment for historically registered qualifications, including provider-based qualifications, as well as final assessment for skills programmes
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NLRD	National Learners Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
PoE	Portfolio of Evidence (for historically registered qualifications, provider qualifications or RPL purposes)
QC	Quality Council
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
QP	Quality Partner
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDP	Skills Development Provider
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOR	Statement of Results

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Description
Access	Opportunity to pursue education and training, including relevant qualifications and part-qualifications, for all prospective learners, including access to a qualification or part-qualification and access to the final summative assessment for certification.

Accountability	All relevant role-players must be able to provide evidence of the development and moderation of assessment tasks and processes, and these tasks and processes are aligned with SAQA's National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment, as well as the sectoral policies derived from the National Policy.
Accredited Provider	Means a legally established institution (public or private) that has been recognised, usually for a particular period of time, by a Quality Council (QC) or its appointed agent, as having the capacity or provisional capacity to offer a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF at the required standard.
Advanced standing	The status granted to a learner for admission to studies at a higher level than the learner's prior formal studies would have allowed, including exemption where applicable.
Apprenticeship	In line with the SDA, Act 97 of 1998, an apprenticeship means a learnership in respect of a listed trade and includes a trade-test in respect of the trade. In the context of the OQSF, an apprenticeship means a learning programme in respect of an officially listed trade or occupational qualification, which includes an EISA in respect of that trade or occupation.
Assessment	Means the process used to identify, gather and interpret information against the required competencies in a qualification or part-qualification or skills programme in order to make a judgement about a learner's achievement.
Assessment Centre	A legally established institution (public or private) that has been recognised (accredited), usually for a particular period of time, by the QCTO, as having the capability and capacity or provisional capacity to assess a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF at the required standard.
Assessment Criteria	The standards used to guide the recognition of learning and assess learner achievement and/or evaluate and certify competence.
Assessment Irregularity	Any error, act or omission, or any alleged event, act or omission that may undermine or threaten to undermine the integrity, credibility, security or fairness of the assessment and final assessment process.
Assessor	A person able to conduct high-quality internal and external assessment for specific qualifications, part-qualifications, or professional designations or skills programmes. Appropriately qualified lecturers, teachers, educators, trainers, examiners, moderators, chief markers, markers, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL/ARPL) specialists, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) officials are all examples of assessors. For ARPL, Assessors and Moderators must be registered with NAMB.

Bias	Assessment practices that hinder or advantage particular learners or groups of learners. An absence of bias is sought, where all learners and educators are treated with equal respect and consideration regardless of social, economic, cultural, faith-based, ethnic, gender or other differences, and where disabled learners and educators are given appropriate support.
Certificate	Means a document indicating formal recognition by the QCTO of an occupational qualification, part-qualification or skills programme awarded to a successful learner.
Competence	The ability to put into practice in the relevant context, the learning outcomes acquired in the process of obtaining a qualification, part-qualification or skills programme.
Credibility	A respected process or product which results from a fair, valid, and reliable validation process designed to enhance the quality of a qualification, part-qualification, professional designation, or skills programme.
Credits	The volume of learning required for a qualification or part-qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the learning outcomes specified for the qualification or part-qualification. As a guide, one credit (1) is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning. . This may be different for the workplace component of the qualification.
Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT)	Means the practice of accumulating credits from one or more cognate learning programmes in an institution and transferring those credits to be recognised towards a qualification/part-qualification or skills programme in the same or different institution.
Credit accumulation	The totalling of credits required to complete a qualification, part-qualification or skills programme.
Credit matrix	Means a system in which learning outcomes can be arranged and compared in levels of increasing complexity based on agreed groupings of credits, such as in modules/subjects or part-qualifications and skills programmes.
Credit transfer	The vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part-qualification on the same or different NQF Sub-Framework.
Pre-assessment	Assessment conducted before teaching, training or RPL process starts, for the purposes of identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses, in order to use the associated information for the purposes of creating suitable learning pathways. i) Learners must complete a pre-assessment for access to be trained in a qualification for which they do not meet the entry requirements by the relevant accredited Skills Development Provider (RPL for access).

	ii) RPL candidates must complete a pre-assessment/interview and be established and confirmed as an RPL candidate prior to the process (RPL for credits).
Dynamic assessment	Assessment practices in which mediation, learning, testing, frequent feedback to learners and systematic monitoring of changes in learning are explicit parts of the learning context. The goal of dynamic assessment is to see whether, by how much, and in what ways those being assessed change as a result of being presented with opportunities to learn.
Educator	An inclusive term referring to teachers, lecturers, facilitators, assessors, moderators, RPL practitioners, and others teaching, educating, training, facilitating, assessing, or enabling learning in learning contexts across the board.
e-learning	A mode of teaching and learning that makes use of technology-mediated features.
Electronic Assessment	Also known as digital assessment, e-assessment, online assessment or computer-based assessment, it is the use of information technology in assessments.
Entry requirement	Means the minimum academic knowledge and practical competencies, and or work experience that a learner must have completed to be able to be admitted for a qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme. This may include recognition of other forms of prior learning such as non-formal and informal learning and work experience deemed as comparable for entry. In the South African context, entry requirements also take into account the broad socio-political issues of access.
Entry requirement to EISA	Competence in all modules of all components or, for RPL, all exit level outcomes and associated assessment criteria, of a qualification, part-qualification, confirmed by a Statement of Results issued to the learner, which is valid for a period of two years internally issue by the issuing authority. This SoR, together with a candidate's ID (or valid alternative ID) forms the permit to be allowed into the EISA session.
Entry requirement to FISA	Competence in all modules of the skills programme or historically registered qualification in order to complete the FISA.
Evaluation of learning	A process involving gathering evidence and making informed judgements about a learning programme, or module or component of a learning programme; or its curriculum, learning materials or assessment; or its impact on learners or society. Evaluation involves making a judgement about the worth, merit or impact of learning or a programme of learning.

Examiner	A qualified and competent person appointed to develop, administer, and oversee a formal assessment, including a person appointed to develop assessment instruments (such as exam papers, marking guidelines, and others). An examiner may be an educator.
Exit Level Outcomes	The knowledge, skills and attitudes that a learner should have obtained or mastered on completion of a qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme and against which the learner is assessed for competence.
External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA)	A final external assessment developed by a qualified and competent person or body not directly involved in the development and/or delivery of the learning being assessed. The EISA is a final assessment which integrates the knowledge, practical and/or work experience to assess the competence of a learner against the stated exit level outcomes of an occupational qualification or part-qualification.

Fairness	Learners are assessed on what they know and have been taught; where questions are set in relation to the cognitive and affective curriculum covered in the teaching and learning; in the case of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) there has been preparation for the competent mediation of the required knowledge, and other competencies, and there is no bias towards any learners on the basis of social class, ethnicity, gender or disability.
Feedback	Specific reporting from the educator to the learner or between learners, on how they have performed in an assessment activity, regardless of the level of formality of the assessment activity. Feedback specifies what was done well, and why, and provided clear guidance regarding what is missing or still needs development in learners' texts, performances or demonstrations, in order to enhance learning.
Final Integrated Supervised Assessment (FISA)	Means a supervised final assessment for which assessment processes, tools, and results are recorded towards the achievement of a historically registered qualification (including provider-based qualifications) or skills programme, conducted under examination conditions with an invigilator/assessor and moderator. These final assessments are decentralised.
Formal assessment	Assessment for which assessment processes, tools, and results are recorded towards achievement of a qualification, part-qualification, professional designation or skills programme.
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, part-qualification or skills programme.
Formative assessment in RPL	A range of continuous assessment procedures used to recognise the competence of a learner and identify learning and teaching still to be done (gap training).The results of formative assessments can prepare a candidate for a summative assessment.
Informal assessment	Any judgements made or feedback given in the course of teaching and learning activities. Informal assessments may be in written form but are not usually recorded.
Informal learning	Learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure, including incidental learning.
Integrated assessment	Assessment which involves all the differing types of assessment tasks required for a particular qualification, part qualification, or skills programme, such as written assessment of theory and practical demonstration of competence.

Integrity	Honesty and transparency in every part of the assessment process, including that assessment questions must be based on work actually covered; learners must at all times be honest about what they offer to be assessed; markers must strive to understand what is offered by learners for assessment, and to grade it fairly at all times; and moderators must moderate a sample of examples against a fair range of cases.
Internal assessment	Any assessment conducted internally by a provider of learning. It is assessment conducted by a person, institution or body directly involved in the development and/or delivery of the learning being assessed.
Internal Summative Assessment	A final formal summative assessment conducted at the end of each module by the SDP to evaluate learning achievements relating to particular components of occupational qualifications, part-qualifications or skills programmes. These results are formally recorded and result in the issuing of the Statement of Results for entrance to the EISA (for occupational qualifications and part-qualifications).
Learner	An inclusive term referring to anyone learning, including pupils, students, apprentices, interns, learners in learnerships, people doing training, and people learning non-formally and informally as well as people enrolled for particular qualifications, part-qualifications or skills programmes, and people learning in contact, distance, e-Learning and self-study contexts at all levels in the system.
Learning	The acquisition of knowledge, understanding, values, skills, competence and/or experience.
Learning Outcomes	The contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values.
Learning pathway	Sequencing of qualifications that allows learners to move vertically, diagonally, and in some cases horizontally, through NQF levels giving learners recognition for full or partially completed qualifications or part- qualifications. Learning pathways can also lead to professional designations when learning pathways include periods of structured work experience overand above qualifications.
Level descriptor	A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the NQF that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification or part-qualification at that level.
Lifelong learning	Learning that takes place in all contexts in life – formally, non-formally and informally. It includes learning behaviours and obtaining knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and competencies for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.

Monitoring and Evaluation	Oversight of the NQF by the appointed structures so as to ensure the advancement of the NQF objectives as a system of co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration for education, training, development and work.
Moderation	In RPL assessment, moderation means internal and external verification that ensures that an RPL assessment mechanism is credible and that assessors and learners/candidates behave in an ethical way; and that the RPL assessments are fair, valid, reliable and practicable.
Moderator	A suitably qualified person who has been appointed in accordance with established criteria to ensure that the assessment instruments, learner scripts or evidence, and processes and procedures are fair, valid, reliable and unbiased.
Module	An assessed/assessable unit of learning with a defined outcome and associated credits.
National Learners' Records Database(NLRD)	The electronic management information system of the NQF, under the authority of SAQA, which contains records of qualifications, part-qualifications, learner achievements, recognised professional bodies, professional designations and all related information such as registrations and accreditations.
National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	A comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, for the classification, registration,publication and articulation of quality assured national qualifications and part-qualifications. The South African NQF is a single integrated system comprising three coordinated qualification sub-frameworks for General and Further Education and Training, Higher Education, and Trades and Occupations.
National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act	Means the National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008), and any subsequent amendments of the NQF Act.
Non-formal learning	Planned learning activities not explicitly designated as learning towards the achievement of a qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme; it is often associated with learning that results in improved workplace practice.
Occupational Curriculum	A statement of the training structure and expected methods of learning and teaching that underpin a qualification or part-qualification to facilitate a more general understanding of its implementation in an education system.
Occupational Qualification	The SDA defines an occupational qualification as a "qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards."

	An Occupational Qualification means a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession developed and quality assured under the auspices of the QCTO and consisting of knowledge/theory and application (practical skills/ work experience/simulated work experience) components and an External Integrated Summative Assessment.
Occupational Standards	Means statements of work performance that reflect the ability to successfully execute the functions of an occupation.
Part Qualification	An assessed unit of learning with a defined outcome that is, or will be, registered as part of a qualification on the NQF.
Professional Body	Anybody of expert practitioners in an occupational field; this includes an occupational body and statutory council.
Quality	Meeting the requirements of nationally agreed outcomes and performance/ assessment criteria, thus facilitating both provision and monitoring.
Quality Assurance	The process of ensuring that specified standards or requirements for teaching, learning, education administration, assessment and the recording of achievements have been met.
Qualification	A registered national qualification consisting of a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the National Qualifications Framework, and certified and awarded by a recognised body.
Quality Council (QC)	Means one of the three councils tasked with developing and managing one of the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF in order to ensure that agreed quality standards are met. These Quality Councils are Umalusi for the GENFETQSF; the CHE for the HEQSF; and the QCTO for the OQSF.
QCTO	The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations established in terms of the NQF Act 67 of 2008.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	The principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated, and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Candidate	This refers to the person seeking Recognition of Prior Learning for their non-formal and informal learning and experience .

Recognition of Prior Learning (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.
Resourcing of RPL	The direct and indirect physical, infrastructural, human and financial capacity needed to build and maintain a mainstream and sustainable national RPL system.
RPL Toolkit	An RPL toolkit refers to a collection of resources and material designed to assist candidates in preparing for and completing the Recognition of Prior Learning process. It provides candidates with a range of tasks and activities to allow them to demonstrate their competence in all components of a qualification, part-qualification or skills programme. The approved RPL toolkit provides candidates with the opportunity to accumulate multiple forms of evidence that is seen to represent a candidate's learning. This collection is often referred to as a Portfolio of Evidence.
Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA)	Means a Sector Education and Training Authority established in terms of section 9(1) of the Skills Development Act to perform functions set out in section 10 of this Act.
Sensitivity to Language	Care taken to ensure that language does not become a barrier to learning; especially for qualifications at NQF levels 1 and 2.
Simulated work experience	Means learning achieved through exposure and interactions gained through a simulated workplace environment that a learner has to complete towards the achievement of a qualification or part-qualification registered on the OQSF.
South African Qualifications Authority(SAQA)	The Qualifications Authority contemplated in Chapter 4 of the NQF Act, No. 67 of 2008.
Skills Development Providers	Means a provider of occupational learning accredited by the QCTO to offer occupational qualifications, part-qualifications, or skills programmes in terms of the Skills Development Act
Skills Programme	Chapter 5 of the SDA, Act 97 of 1998 defines a skills programme as a "skills programme that is occupationally based and when completed will constitute/ contribute a credit towards a qualification registered on the NQF".
Stakeholder	In the NQF context means any entity responsible for the implementation of the NQF.
Standard	Means the set criteria, norms and model that are prescribed.
Subject Matter Expert	A Subject Matter Expert (SME) is someone with extensive knowledge and expertise in a specific area or field, often sought after for their insights and guidance in that particular field.

Summative Assessment	Assessment conducted at the end of sections of learning, or at the end of a whole learning programme, to evaluate learning achievements related to a particular qualification, part-qualification or skills programme.
Supervised Assessment	The Final Integrated Supervised Assessment (theory and/or practical) conducted by the SDP for historically registered qualifications or skills programmes in a supervised manner under examination conditions with an invigilator/ assessor and moderator.
Statement of Results	A statement of results of all learning for which a learner is enrolled or which the learner has completed that is issued by an accredited Skills Development Provider or Assessment Centre. For RPL, the statement of results may reflect a candidate's competence against the exit level outcomes and associated assessment criteria of the qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme.
Transparency	The extent to which the assessment criteria and processes are known, visible to, and understood by learners and the various role-players in the assessment process.
Validation	Any assessment-related activity or practice which relates to the credibility of the assessment by confirming that the assessment is assessing what it is meant to assess.
Validity	The extent to which the assessment measures what it has been developed to measure. Validity is about the appropriateness, usefulness and meaningfulness of assessment procedures, methods, instruments, and materials. Assessment is valid when assessment tasks actually test the knowledge and skills required for defined competencies and learning outcomes.
Verification	Confirmation that the RPL results awarded to a learner are accurate and authentic. QCTO's process for externally checking the validity of an RPL process that resulted in the required SOR for admission to the EISA.
Work Experience	Exposure and interactions gained through being in the workplace.
Workplace-based Learning	The learning achieved through exposure and interactions required to practice, gained while integrating the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the workplace.

1 PREAMBLE

1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a practice that gives value and recognition to a person's previous learning, regardless of how and where that learning was acquired. The Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) is especially a context in which RPL can be practiced due to the nature of occupational qualifications. In many cases, workers are required to perform a range of activities in the workplace – but do not have a formal qualification. Workers areoften disadvantaged and denied access to workplaces or promotion opportunities in favour of individuals that have formal academic qualifications.

1.2 Worker demands and reasons for wanting RPL are to meet the following human developmental challenges:

- Social justice
- Access to education and training
- Validation of knowledge
- Personal and social empowerment
- Improving the education and training system
- Job opportunities

1.3 Recognition of Prior Learning is therefore critical to ensure that workers can receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge that have been developed in a range of different ways. RPL practices for the OQSF should be implemented in ways that are practical and user-friendly for all RPL candidates to follow.

1.4 South Africa is currently undergoing a renewed drive to develop a skilled nation in a more focused way than in the past. Therefore, RPL must be conducted in a more rigorous way, together with the identification of real development pathways and real employment benefits that would contribute to this country's economic reform and development.

1.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process by which individuals who have gained skills and knowledge through informal, non-formal or experiential learning can be assessed and have their prior knowledge, skills and competencies recognised where they meet the requirements of an NQF registered qualification or part-qualification, or skills programme. Individuals deserve credit for their knowledge, competencies, and skills even if these have been gained through informal education or have been acquired in their working lives or 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

2.1 The QCTO policy for implementing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides for the implementation of RPL for qualifications and part-qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF), and skills programmes.

2.2 The purpose of this Policy is to ensure:

2.2.1 A simplified, aligned and enabling environment for RPL for the OQSF;

2.2.2 The demystification of RPL and to build a general understanding of implementing RPL in this sector;

2.2.3 The advancement of a comprehensive, quality-assured and resource-driven approach to optimise the delivery of RPL services and programmes, including RPL assessments;

2.2.4 The quality assurance and benchmarking of RPL overseen by SAQA and the three Quality Councils;

2.2.5 That a shared understanding of RPL within a broader lifelong learning context is understood;

2.2.6 The implementation of RPL processes and tools across all economic sectors for uniformity between Quality Partners, playing an active role in the “resourcing of RPL”;

2.2.7 That RPL be an integral part of every training programme in the case of those learners with previous knowledge and experience;

2.2.8 That RPL practices should be based on experience, reflection and knowledge;

2.2.9 That SETAs actively implement RPL projects to assist RPL candidates in obtaining a registered qualification.

2.2.10 That there is a seamless process for the implementation and achievement of RPL;

2.2.11 That potential candidates attain recognition of the appropriate knowledge and skills required for personal development and the employment market, and that recognition is given to the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through experience and not for experience alone. If found lacking in either of these, the RPL candidate must receive gap training by an accredited Skills Development Provider approved to implement RPL

2.2.12 That the roles and functions of employers, public and private providers, and RPL practitioners in the provision of RPL across the education and training system are recognised; and that

2.2.13 RPL candidates receive support and guidance throughout the RPL process, and assessments are flexible and developmental when gap training is identified.

2.3 The RPL process can enable the Department of Employment and Labour (DoEL) to realise the principles of "closing the wage gap" and ensuring equity in the workplace and society. RPL offers the potential employees to gain a qualification through RPL practices, thereby widening access and redressing previous and continuing disadvantages.

2.4 The models of RPL should attempt to reconcile learner-centred procedures and assessments with rigorous standards and quality assurance systems for the awarding of qualifications, part qualifications or skills programmes.

3 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 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. In 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-qualifications on the sub-framework.

3.2 This Policy provides for the implementation of RPL within the context of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, no. 67 of 2008 (and any subsequent amendments of the NQF Act). The QCTO acknowledges that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a fundamental tenet of the NQF and provides access, progression, support, and career guidance for learners at all levels of informal education and training and in workplaces.

3.3 The QCTO's RPL Policy is aligned to *SAQA's National Policy, and Criteria for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (Amended March 2019)* and must be read in conjunction with the QCTO's OQSF Policy (2021), and the QCTO's Assessment Policy(June 2026).

3.4 The *National RPL Coordination Policy* elaborates and holds SAQA and the Quality Councils (QCs) accountable to perform their roles concerning RPL as stated in the NQF Act.

3.5 The White Paper for Post-School Education (November 2013) explicitly states that Recognition of

Prior Learning (RPL) remains an integral 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 post-school institutions.

3.6 This policy seeks to position RPL in relation to the overarching national policies, principles and priorities of the NQF in South Africa.

4 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

4.1 This Policy constitutes a quality assurance framework for the provisioning of RPL, and must be implemented by all Quality Partners, SETAs, accredited Skills Development Providers (public and private), workplaces and accredited assessment centres, statutory professional bodies, RPL practitioners, RPL candidates and all other entities that implement RPL for qualifications on the OQSF. It applies to all occupational qualifications, part qualifications, skills programmes, and trades.

4.2 Qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the NQF may be awarded in whole or in part through RPL. Processes followed must be credible, quality assured and consistent with accepted and approved principles and criteria of SAQA, the QCTO and the Institution concerned.

5 POLICY STATEMENT

5.1 RPL Principles

The QCTO aims to adhere to the following RPL principles in this policy:

a) Equity and social inclusion
b) RPL by design
c) Institutionalisation of RPL
d) Lifelong Learning
e) Advocacy and Communication
f) Mobility of learners and employees
g) Collaboration with Stakeholders
h) Quality Assurance of RPL Process
i) Accurate documentation and Record keeping
j) Continuous Review and Improvement

5.2 RPL within the OQSF

5.2.1 Candidates may seek RPL for various reasons, depending on multiple contexts. Two primary

formsof RPL reflect the different purposes and the different processes within which RPL takes place:

a) *RPL for access*: To provide an alternative access route into a programme of learning, qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme;for those who do not meet the formal minimum requirements for admission.
b) *RPL for credit*: To recognise the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired for or towards a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF, as well as skills programmes. This may be for credit against individual modules, or against the full set of exit level outcomes and associated assessment criteria of a qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme in order to access the EISA or FISA.

In both cases, RPL processes may occur at a pre, formative, or summative points, or in-curricular to create opportunities for advanced standing or recognition in the workplace.

5.2.2 Within the context of the OQSF, Recognition of Prior Learning is the evaluation and acknowledgement of the knowledge and skills that a candidate has gained so that they may:

c) Access qualifications and part-qualifications on the OQSF, as well as skills programmes, where they do not meet the stipulated entry requirements.
d) Access the External Integrated Summative Assessment for qualifications and part-qualifications, or the Final Integrated Supervised Assessment for skills programmes.

5.2.3 With regard to 5.1.2 above: In order to apply for RPL, a candidate must have at least the same number of years' work or proven community experience as the duration of the qualification, part-qualification or skills programme, plus one year.

5.2.4 Each entity advocating RPL as a mechanism for obtaining access and/or entrance to the EISA should:

e) Develop and publish clear criteria and guidelines against which application for RPL for access to qualifications and entrance to the EISA or FISA will be evaluated, with standardisation in the sub-sectors where possible.
f) Develop and publish guidelines for the RPL process and mechanism to be used and appeals against RPL summative decisions.

c) Ensure that RPL information (including policies, guidelines, criteria, codes of conduct, ethics, assessment, moderation, RPL fees, in line with QCTO's RPL Policy) is visible on their respective websites.

5.3 Assessment in the RPL process

5.3.1 Assessment, an integral feature of all forms of RPL, does not exist in isolation from a range of otherstrategies that allow for different sources of knowledge and forms of learning to be compared and judged. Where prior learning, such recognition must be based on the assessed evidence of the knowledge and skills acquired informally and non-formally.

5.3.2 RPL assessment should:

a) Adhere to fair, valid and reliable practices;
b) Acknowledge different sources of assessing knowledge and skills demonstrated in real-time within a contextualised environment;
c) Apply the assessment principles as outlined in the National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa, as well as QCTO's Assessment Policy for qualifications, and part qualifications registered on the OQSF and skills programmes; and
d) Ensure all learner results via RPL are moderated before a Statement of Results (SoR) is issued to gain entrance to the EISA, or before entrance to the FISA.

5.3.3 Pre-assessments may be conducted before teaching or training or RPL process starts, or for the purposes of identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses, in order to use the associated information for the purposes of creating suitable learning pathways.

i) Candidates may complete a pre-assessment for access to be trained in a qualification (RPL for access)
ii) RPL candidates must complete a pre-assessment/interview and be established as an RPL candidate prior to the process (RPL for credits)

5.3.4 The External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA) covers all components of a qualification, or part- qualification registered on the OQSF. The Final Integrated Supervised Assessment (FISA) encompasses all elements of a skills programme.

The purpose of the final assessment before certification is to:

a) Ensure consistency and credibility of the assessment of occupational qualifications, part-qualifications and skills programmes.
b) Ensure the use of nationally standardised assessment instruments according to occupationalstandards.

5.3.5 To address past social injustice issues, RPL may target candidates who may not be fluent in the mainstream language used. Some occupations do not necessarily need one to be fluent in the

mainstream language. This would necessitate support for the candidate in a familiar language.

The aim is to ensure that candidates:

5.3.6 Are not disadvantaged from enrolling for RPL because they are unable to express theirknowledge and skills in the mainstream language used;

c) Are assisted by translators and interpreters where necessary; and that

d) RPL Toolkits are translated, transcribed, and professionally presented.

5.4 Underlying principles and processes for the implementation of RPL

5.4.1 RPL may be carried out at any level of learning and any NQF level and is a dynamic assessment process by nature.

5.4.2 RPL processes should be mediated: Knowledge and skills may be obtained non-formally, informally and formally, and RPL practitioners must mediate the types and levels of knowledge and skills requiredto enable this recognition.

5.4.3 The RPL process is multi-dimensional. It is a process through which non-formal, informal and formallearning can be measured and mediated against learning outcomes for recognition within and acrossdifferent contexts.

5.4.4 RPL is undertaken and awarded holistically. A holistic approach includes the principles and processes through which a person's prior knowledge and skills are made visible, mediated, and assessed and requires the involvement of the full range of stakeholders within this environment.

5.4.5 The RPL process must:

a) Be fair, reliable, valid, ethical and transparent.

b) Be consistent across time, place, role players and respond to a sectoral demand-led model.

c) Use methodologies that are fit-for-purpose and reflect a consistent level of higher cognitive challenge relevant to the NQF level descriptors.

d) Avoid unfair exclusion.

e) Determine whether the learner is an RPL candidate upon completion of a pre-assessment.

f) Empower potential learners by correctly placing them in formal training programmes (gap training) at a level that will be to their maximum advantage.

g) Ensure candidate support before, during and after the RPL process.

h) Recognise the diversity of knowledge, skills and learning styles and provide holistic and flexible assessment during the process.

i) Provide educational opportunities for life-long learning.

j) Meet the quality standards of a particular qualification, part qualification or skills programme.

k) Impress upon candidates that there is no RPL without learning.

l) Ensure identified gaps are closed by means of gap training at an accredited Skills Development Provider, approved to implement RPL

m) Ensure that assessment practices include evidence of knowledge, practical and work experience.

5.4.6 Monitoring, evaluation and verification are essential elements in the ongoing development of the RPL process for ensuring 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.

6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The implementation of RPL requires the involvement of the following key stakeholders with clear roles and responsibilities:

6.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Quality Partners/SETAs:

6.1.1 Provide the direct and indirect physical, infrastructural, human, and financial capacity needed to build and sustain RPL programmes and services within the national learning system.

6.1.2 Provide resources and opportunities for equitable access to RPL programmes and services in a manner that is consistent with the government's commitment to redress imbalances that still exist in our vastly unequal society and specifically in the labour market, with a particular focus on implementing RPL for qualifications, part qualifications and skills programmes that will provide impetus to South Africa's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP).

6.1.3 Collaborate with SAQA, the QCTO and any national mechanism or projects to mitigateRPL implementation barriers and advance the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of RPL.

6.1.4 Focus on RPL for returning-to-learning youth and adults who need to be encouraged and resourced in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders in the labour market and the national learning system.

6.1.5 Put systems and procedures in place to incentivise and support the professional development of RPL practitioners.

6.1.6 Quality Partners (QPs) may use approved successful RPL processes that have already been

implemented through an MoU with such industry partners.

6.1.7 QPs are responsible for the development of RPL toolkits, mechanisms and processes to be used for RPL for all qualifications, part qualifications and skills programmes in their sector. All RPL toolkits must be approved by the QCTO before implementation.

6.1.8 RPL as a tool for transformation should benefit all languages, not only the dominant languages. Mechanisms should be put in place to accommodate such individuals to ensure effective delivery.

6.1.9 Delivery of RPL should take cognisance of lessons learned to date from practice to enable a less bureaucratic system, considering research in this regard.

6.2 Roles and responsibilities of SAQA:

6.2.1 Provide over-arching leadership to the Quality Councils (QCs) for implementing their aligned RPLpolicies.

6.2.2 Receive relevant data on RPL, including learning achievements via RPL, for uploading onto the NLRD.

6.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Employers:

6.3.1 Develop and implement organisational RPL policies and improve human resource support for RPL.

6.3.2 Encourage staff to engage in RPL for recognition of employees' prior knowledge and skills towards the achievement of a qualification, part qualification or skills programme.

6.4 Roles and Responsibilities of accredited Skills Development Providers conducting RPL:

6.4.1 Skills Development Providers conducting RPL must be accredited and approve to implement RPL by the QCTO and ensure that they have the necessary staff capacity to deliver quality RPL services and programmes.

6.4.2 Conduct pre-assessments before the RPL process starts, for the purposes of identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses, in order to use the associated information for the purposes of creating suitable learning pathways, and ensure completion of gap training required

6.4.3 Establish policies that clarify possible pathways for learning, RPL, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

6.4.4 Progressively develop and enhance capacity to implement RPL as per SAQA's 2019 Amended RPL Policy and Criteria; and the RPL, CAT and Assessment Policies of the QCTO.

6.4.5 Ensure an RPL information management system is used that meets the requirements of the QCTO,the NLRD and other Government information management systems.

6.4.6 Issue the RPL candidate with a Statement of Results (SoR) which indicates the candidate's competence against all the exit level outcomes and associated assessment criteria of the qualification, part-qualification or skills programme. This is an admission requirement to the final External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA) or Final Integrated Supervised Assessment (FISA), which must be completed successfully in order for the candidate to be certificated

6.4.7 Provide advice, counselling, and support services to assist RPL candidates before, during, and after RPL processes.

6.4.8 Establish an appeals process for RPL candidates to engage with RPL-related judgements.

6.4.9 Ensure an equitable fee structure for all RPL programmes and services, including those programmes and services that involve assessing workplace-based learning for credit against existing formal qualifications or part qualifications.

6.4.10 Collaborate with SAQA, SETAs, NAMB and the QCTO to advance the implementation, monitoringand evaluation of RPL.

6.4.11 Implement the standardised RPL toolkit developed by the QP and approved by the QCTO for access to a qualification, part-qualification, or skills programme, or for the final assessments for a qualification, part qualification or skills programme.

6.4.12 Ensure RPL as a tool for transformation benefits all languages, not only the dominant languages. Mechanisms should be put in place to accommodate such individuals to ensure effective delivery.

6.5 Roles and Responsibilities of RPL practitioners:

6.5.1 Must be highly knowledgeable about the purpose, aim and acceptable processes of RPL and

be a holistic Subject Matter Expert.

6.5.2 Adhere to the requirements as set out in SAQA's 2019 Amended RPL Policy and Criteria, and the QCTO's RPL Policy, and those determined by the relevant bodies and governance structures, which may include a Quality Partner, workplace, or statutory professional body.

6.5.3 Undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as RPL practitioners and meet the professional requirements.

6.6 Roles and Responsibilities of RPL candidates:

6.6.1 In order to apply for RPL, a candidate has to have at least the same number of years' work or proven community experience as the duration of the qualification, part-qualification or skills programme, plus one year.

6.6.2 The candidate must be approved as an RPL candidate through a pre- assessment and/or interview prior to the RPL procedure, and complete all relevant gap training and evidence requirements, before being issued with a Statement of Results which is the entry requirement for the EISA (External Integrated Assessment).

6.6.3 Identify, gather, and interpret information according to the criteria outlined by the entity undertaking the RPL assessment. In this regard, the candidate should be:

a) Advised regarding potential RPL routes and be guided and supported to prepare evidenceof relevant prior learning;
b) Assisted with their preparation for assessment;
c) Provided with feedback after an assessment; and
d) Advised, guided and supported to fill gaps where the RPL assessment shows gaps incandidates' knowledge and skills.

6.6.4 Accept co-responsibility and fair treatment as an equal partner in the RPL process.

6.6.5 Respect and adhere to the procedures of the entities involved.

6.6.6 Candidates should be encouraged to provide feedback on the entire RPL experience upon completion of the process.

6.7 Roles and Responsibilities of the QCTO:

6.7.1 Develop Policy on RPL for its sector, considering the relevant national SAQA policies and thebroader context of the OQSF and related policies.

6.7.2 Work with accredited SDPs to ensure the development and implementation of the QCTO's RPL Policy within the OQSF.

6.7.3 Monitor and evaluate the implementation of RPL, including:

a) Developing and implementing standardised approaches within the sub-sectors of the OQSF, where possible;

b) Supporting the training and monitoring of RPL practitioners, including facilitators, assessors, moderators, and administrators in the RPL process;

c) Ensuring consistency across RPL institutions/practitioners in similar contexts;

d) Supporting the co-ordinated development of RPL toolkits and instruments relevant for particular contexts, as appropriate;

e) Monitoring the RPL admission and achievement rates for institutions (RPL providers) while maintaining the strictest confidentiality regarding individual RPL candidates and institutions; as well as

f) Ensuring that achievements via RPL are certificated and that there is no distinction, other than for data analysis, between qualifications, part-qualifications and skills programmes awarded via conventional and RPL routes, respectively. Certificates issued for RPL achievement must not specify that the achievement was obtained through RPL. For there to be no distinction between learners achieving a qualification obtained via conventional means or as a result of RPL, all qualifying learners need to complete the External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA) for qualifications or part qualifications or the Final Integrated Supervised Assessment (FISA) for skills programmes. Admission to the EISA is a Statement of Results (SoR) that reflects the candidate's competence against the exit level outcomes and associated assessment criteria of the qualification or part-qualification. For admission to the FISA, learners must have proven their competencies via an RPL process conducted by the SDP.

6.7.4 Advocate for RPL as a means for access and/or credit (certification of the qualification upon successful completion of the EISA or FISA).

6.7.5 Encourage close working relationships with industry in and across the sector, as appropriate, to assist QPs with the implementation of RPL.

6.7.6 Develop and maintain information management systems compatible with the NLRD and other relevant government information management systems and submit the data to SAQA.

6.7.7 Conduct and oversee RPL-related research in the OQSF in collaboration with SAQA.

6.7.8 Collaborate with SAQA, NAMB, the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Quality Partners,and other role players in developing RPL in their sectors.

6.7.9 Approve Quality Partners' (QPs)RPL processes and mechanisms prior to implementation.

6.7.10 Facilitate and monitor enabling agreements to increase RPL provisioning.

6.7.11 Monitor institutions that offer RPL following criteria established for this purpose.

6.7.12 The QCTO will do quality assurance of RPL according to RPL policies, guidelines, standards, processes, and associated practices in collaboration with its Quality Partners. Quality assurance of RPL must be undertaken with the explicit intention to protect the integrity of the processes and outcomes concerned.

6.7.13 The concept of quality in RPL must adhere to generally agreed quality assurance principles, including qualified personnel, fitness for purpose, transparency, and fair outcomes.

6.7.14 Quality assurance of RPL is manifested by the establishment and adherence to policies, standards, procedures and associated practices that ensure that the knowledge, skills, and values of learners are recognised and validated, so that learners can successfully engage in further learning that contributes meaningfully to their educational and/or employment goals.

7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

7.1 An accredited SDPs offering RPL must have an RPL appeals policy and procedure in place and this must be communicated to the candidate.

7.2 Learners' complaints about the RPL assessment process should be lodged at the accredited SDPs conducting the RPL assessment.

7.3 The procedure is to be decided by the accredited SDPs, but the candidate has a right to know what procedure is to be followed.

7.4 The notice of an appeal must state the grounds on which the applicant is seeking the appeal.

7.5 Where an appeal/complaint cannot be addressed to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, then the matter must be referred to the QCTO. The QCTO will decide what recourse is required to settle

the matter, and the QCTO Council's decision is regarded as final.

8 REPORTING

8.1 With submission of results, QPs must indicate whether achievements were via the conventional manner or via RPL.However, this is just for analysis of data and is not reflected on QCTO certificates.

8.2 The QCTO must report to SAQA on RPL implementation across the relevant accredited SDPs base quarterly for inclusion in the documentation to the NQF Chief Executive Officers' Committee.

8.3 The above reporting is required to monitor access and redress indicators over time. This data must be maintained under strict conditions of confidentiality and may not be shared with any individuals not directly involved in recording the data.

9 NON-COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY

Non-compliance with the provisions of this Policy shall be dealt with in accordance with QCTO procedures and regulatory framework.

10 POLICY REVIEW

This policy must be reviewed every three years unless urgent review is required.