



# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

National Qualifications Centre

United Arab Emirates

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## About the National Qualifications Centre

In reference to the Prime Minister's Office resolution number (21) for the year 2021 regarding the Ministry of Education (MoE) organisation chart. The National Qualifications Centre (NQC) key functions can be summarised as:

- designing, developing and implementing a comprehensive and unified qualifications framework for the Emirates, the *QF Emirates*, is used to place, design, develop and recognise qualifications in the UAE;
- facilitating the transfer, articulation and continuity of learning of individuals between different education pathways and promoting further education principles;
- establishing and maintaining standards and regulations for qualifications and national occupations
- promoting the principles of lifelong learning with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and articulation as its key base;
- establishing and accrediting Awarding Bodies (AWB) and Accredited Training Providers (ATPs);
- quality assure accredited AWB/approved authorities;
- developing policies and standards related to TVET in the UAE in accordance with international best practices.

The NQC is committed to developing the skills of learners to prepare them for employment and/or the next level of their learning. It aims to deliver outcomes that assist the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to keep pace with scientific and technological progress and meet the country's economic and social development needs.

For more information about the *NQC Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure* please contact:

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## 1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance, support and clarification to Recognised Training Providers (RTP's) and approved authorities by the NQC in their implementation and claiming credit on RPL assessments.

This document is intended for:

- All staff within RTP's, partners and approved authority by NQC
- NQC accredited Awarding Bodies (AWB)
- Learners/Students
- NQC Core and Associate staff
- Ministry of Education and VETAC

## 2. The Scope of the Policy

The guidelines detailed in this document are applicable to all NQC qualifications and units approved by VETAC; an exception to this includes those qualifications and NQC units that are not approved by NQC for RPL. These exceptions will be stated in the relevant Qualification Specifications. In cases where it applies, RPL may be excluded by the NQC in Health and Safety Requirements, work placement, License to Practice and for regulated professions. NQC reserve the rights to exclude the RPL assessment for any qualification/unit.

The use of RPL is not compulsory. However, in the event that the initial assessment or a learner demonstrates the possibility of RPL and the qualification in question permits the use of RPL, the RTP must assess the RPL. Such RTP using RPL must obtain formal written approval from the respective Awarding Body (AWB) or approved authority, prior to conducting RPL assessment for learners. RTP's must have the approved internal RPL policy and procedures together with efficient Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) for assessments which includes RPL and relevant resources to assess and undertake RPL.

In regards to Higher Education (HE) programmes all parties will need to refer to the HE RPL policy.

## 3. Statement of Policy

RPL is an assessment process that evaluates an individual's knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and competence obtained through prior learning, and is aimed at awarding credits if the learner can demonstrate that they satisfy the set performance/assessment criteria in the qualification which it is being RPL against through evidence, and as a result do not require further development at the identified level through a course of learning.

The RPL process determines the level and credits to be recognised towards an, unit/s or qualification, and pertains to learners who can present evidence of having acquired prior skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding relevant to their

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current qualification/units being undertaken. Evidence of prior learning can be obtained from a range of sources, but is not limited to the following:

- training and education that has included some form of assessment
- work experience and work placement
- voluntary activities and community involvement
- previous accreditation of qualifications

The most appropriate assessment methodology should be used for RPL to ensure the assessment requirements of a specific unit or qualification is fully met. RPL may be used towards the award of a single unit, or multiple units, but is restricted to achievement of an entire qualification. It is highly unusual that learners can provide prior achievement to match every aspect of the qualification assessment requirements. RPL cannot be used to provide partial accreditation of units and can only be used for up to 50% of the qualification. In rare cases exceptions may be given and this will be evaluated on a case by case basis. All such requests to extend the RPL percentage by RTP's must be made to the AWB or approved authority. The AWB will conduct the necessary evaluation of the RTP's request and make a recommendation to the NQC for final approval.

A successful RPL outcome is where the learner is awarded credits that lead to the partial completion programme or qualification.

The evidence provided by the learner for assessment of RPL must be:

- Valid
- Reliable
- Current
- Authentic
- Sufficient

RPL should be applied in cases where it is of value and benefits the learner and RTP's in enabling the assessment of uncertificated learning and promotes life-long learning. All evidence must be subjected to thorough evaluation based on the specified learning outcomes and assessment standards in the unit/s being claimed. RTP's must ensure all any person undertaking RPL are assessor qualified and possess the relevant expertise to ensure these criteria are fully met.

Learner's evidence of prior achievement of current skills, attitude, knowledge and understanding will vary among sectors. And in such cases, many factors should be considered, such as, level of experience, technological changes and the nature of outcome claimed. Understanding and competence of the learner may be tested by the assessor if currency of evidence is questionable, while adhering to the specified assessment criteria.

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In the event that the submitted evidence is deemed valid, reliable, current and sufficient to only cover one or more learning outcome, or partially meet the requirement of any learning outcomes, additional assessment methods should be applied to gather adequate evidence to enable the achievement of the performance/assessment criteria learning outcome(s) for the entire unit. The use of RPL can only allow for competence to be recognised with a pass grade when grading systems are used. RPL is not aimed at providing exceptional entry to or exempting learners from a programme of study.

#### 4. Principles of RPL

The RPL is a valid assessment method which allows individual learners to claim credit(s) for acquisition of prior knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies required for a programme or qualification at all levels of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) for the UAE, as related to QFEmirates.

Prior achievement of a required standard i.e. learning outcome and assessment criteria met at a required level is of equal value and esteem to all forms of learning irrespective of sources or how it was achieved and assessment was undertaken. This may have been acquired through leaning, work experience, or through a formal programme that is of equal value.

It is mandatory that RPL meets the same quality and standing as qualifications achieved through formal education and training. Therefore it is essential that AWB or approved authorities have robust policies and procedures to support RTP's. AWB must ensure the same rigor of external quality assurance is adhered to in relation to RPL claims. The practices used and decisions made must be fair, rigorous, transparent, reliable and accessible to learners and stakeholders in order to uphold confidence in the assessment decision and outcome of RPL. The assessment process must be transparent, valid, reliable, fair and flexible.

RPL is a learner-centred voluntary process requested by a learner or on behalf of a learner. Learners must be supported and guided through the entire RPL process by the RTP, consulting the programme or qualification and pre-determining in respects of which unit/s of learning they should apply for RPL, preparing action plans which identifies, and document the type of evidence needed to demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies. Further support and guidance should be provided by the RTP to allow the learner to make the claim.

Assessors and quality staff must ensure that assessment criteria are only deemed to have been met where assessment is valid, fair, reliable, flexible and fit for purpose, and where evidence is valid, reliable, sufficient, authentic and current. Assessment methods used to assess RPL must be equally as rigorous as other assessment methods and must be fit for purpose and related to the evidence of assessment.

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## 5. RPL Procedure Guidance

The procedures outlined below must be present in any RPL policy of a RTP along with auditable records available for scrutiny by the External Quality Assurers (EQA).

### Stage 1: Careers Guidance and Advice (CGA)

Once a learner has been given the relevant careers, guidance and advice regarding RPL, and is interested in undertaking the RPL process they will require support with the following:

- information on the process for registration and how to claim achievement for the unit/s, programme or qualification for which RPL will be applied, and any associated cost.
- details on the sources of professional guidance and support accessible to learners
- administrative processes pertaining to the learner in regards to RPL applications
- currency of the existing experience, qualification, credits, competence or skills, i.e. does the evidence provided relate to current learning? Was the acquired knowledge and skills applied regularly to sustain competence in line with the unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria and identified unit level? Where there are specific requirements and/or time limits set by to AWB, or approved authorities for the currency of evidence, demonstration of learning and certification, such information must be made accessible and transparent.
- information regarding timelines and appeals process

Learners must be informed of the appeals and complaints procedure and process prior to registration and how to access it. In the event a learner would like to make an appeal against an assessment decision via the RPL process, they will need to follow the standard appeals processes which exist within the RTP with the right of appeal to the respective AWB or approved authority.

It is mandatory that any evidence provided by the learner for RPL must be acquired prior to the start of their programme.

### Stage 2: Pre-assessment - evidence gathering and giving support

When a learner has decided to take the RPL route, it is essential that the learner is informed of the entire RPL process and is provided with sufficient support to make a viable claim and decisions concerning evidence collection and submission for assessment.

At this stage, the individual will have a formal agreed assessment plan developed with the support from the assessor and collect relevant evidence required. Evidence will depend on the purpose, learning outcome and assessment criteria for the

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specified unit.

### Stage 3: Assessment process/ evidence

The RPL assessment process is methodical and involves gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about learner's prior learning and experience in relation to specified unit standards.

In order to uphold the integrity of the RPL process, units and qualifications, it is essential that consideration has been given to issues of inclusion and assessments are valid, reliable, current, authentic and sufficient

Evidence submitted for RPL assessment should be clearly referenced in order to allow efficient assessment as well as for internal and external quality assurance.

RPL Learning is just another assessment methodology and must therefore be subjected to the same quality assurance processes as that of any other assessment being undertaken by the learner. RTP's must have IQA and monitoring processes to support RPL defined within the IQA strategy, policies and evident within the IQA sample.

### Stage 4: Feedback

Following assessment the assessor will provide the learner with feedback based on the outcomes of the assessment, along with support and guidance on options and next steps.

In the event that the learner has not achieved the award, the learner will be required to undertake the standard assessment arrangements for the respective unit/s.

### Stage 5: Awarding achievement

The respective AWB or approved authority is responsible for awarding achievement through the same procedure as other forms of assessment. Achievement through RPL should be referenced as such to ensure the appropriate amounts specified in rules of combination for qualification are not exceeded or are sufficiently met.

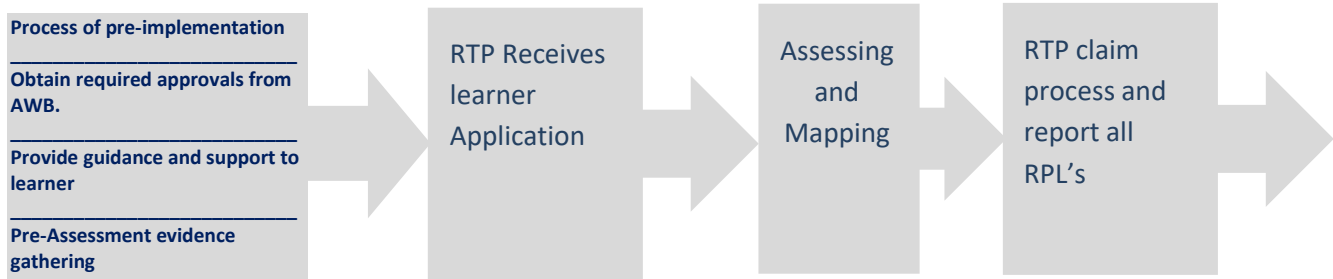
The learners will receive at the end of the assessment process transcripts attested by RTP and relevant AWB.

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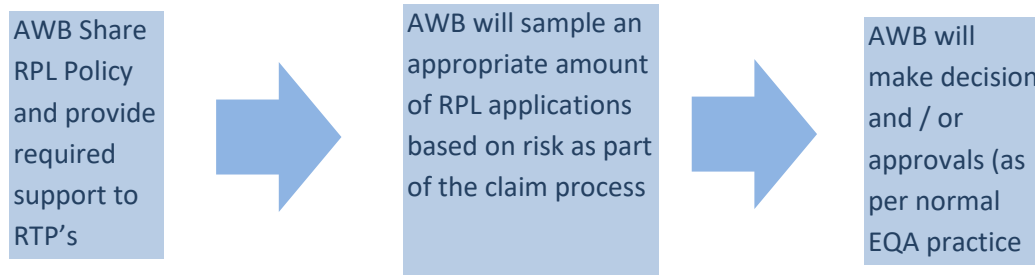


### RTP PROCESS GUIDE FOR RPL:

RTP's planning to RPL must have approved system to support RTP (refer to AWB requirements)



### AWB PROCESS GUIDE FOR RPL:



## 6. Documentation and information on the use of RPL

AWBs and approved authorities are responsible for sharing and supporting RTP's in the implementation of the RPL policy and procedure.

RTP's are required to inform the respective AWB or approved authority on any RPL achievement claims and in cases where the learner has completed assessment requirements different from those of the standard assessment.

It is the responsibility of the EQA (i.e. AWB or approved authority) to identify the provision where RPL has been applied.

RTPs will be required to inform the EQA prior to any activity where this assessment method has been used so that the work is included in the sample.

RPL assessments must be included in standardisation and evaluation activities.

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Evidence of assessment decisions must be retained as per NQCs RTP criteria.

The Recognition of Prior Learning is different from:

- Being exempted
- Categorisation as an equivalent
- The accumulation or transfer of credit/s
- Articulation

\*Users of this policy will need to ensure compliance of all policies and standards mentioned within this document. i.e. Standards of Assessments and IQA. Refer to the official NQC glossary on the NQC website for all terms mentioned in this document.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



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