




RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)
THE WESTERN CAPE COLLEGE OF NURSING (WCCN)

Doc. Number	WCCN/2018/2
Date Issued	2018/01/23
Revision	

Author	Position	Signature	Date
Policy Task Team			2018/01/18

Approved by	Position	Signature	Date
College Senate	Head of Academia		2018/02/05

All Change requests should be submitted to WCCN

REVISION	TITLE OR BRIEF DESCRIPTION	ENTERED BY
2021/12/21	Rebranding	Dr T M Bock
2022/7/30	Changes 3.2	Dr TM Bock
2024/01/12	Re-branding	Dr T M Bock

SENATEPREAMBLE

This policy is to be applied from adoption hereof. This policy is by no means to be retrospectively applied and will only deal with the exam cycle, immediately prior to ratification of this policy.



PURPOSE AND STATEMENT

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is undertaken in the context of the institutional commitment to alignment with the principles of the NQF and the National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa, with specific reference to:

- a) broadening the social base of higher education
- b) increasing access to higher education
- c) increasing mobility of students across higher education institutions
- d) and other learning contexts
- e) accelerating progress through learning programmes
- f) increasing the number of graduates
- g) development of Health Care workers.

1. SCOPE

The scope of this policy is limited to RPL in the context of academic programmes at WCCN. It does not refer to RPL used in the context of job promotion, job upgrading, employment equity planning or succession planning, which this policy views as falling under policies related to Human Resource Management (HRM) at WCCN. The RPL policy may, however, be used to inform HRM decisions where career pathing needs to be linked to educational opportunities for WCCN staff.

Advanced standing (RPL Credits) are regarded as RPL if the experience and competence of the candidate is being assessed against the outcomes of a specified subject/module, but not if the subject exemption involves credit transfer as described below.

Exemptions (Credit transfer) are not viewed as RPL in this policy. Credit transfer is defined in the HEQF (2007: 8) as "the process ... whereby credits obtained at one institution may be recognised by another as meeting part of the requirements for graduation, and credits for a completed qualification may be recognised as meeting part of the requirements of another qualification". Credit transfer requires WCCN to validate prior formal learning through evaluation of the quality of an accredited provider and its relevant accredited programme/s and parts of programmes (i.e. subjects or modules within a programme/s).

RPL requires validation of prior informal and non-formal learning. Credit transfer may, however, fall within the scope of this policy where WCCN assessors doubt the currency of part/s of a qualification/programme, but are willing to consider the possibility that the RPL candidate may have achieved the relevant currency through informal or non-formal learning (see definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning under the definitions section below).

WCCN considers two forms of RPL, namely RPL for entry into a programme where the candidate does not meet the specific entry criteria, such as the NQF levels of former official programmes or credits being awarded to a component of no more than 50% content of a similar programme followed at another HEI.

2. DEFINITIONS

Recognition of Prior Learning:

Recognition of Prior Learning is an epistemological process that includes development, teaching, mentoring, assessing and, where appropriate, accrediting the acquired knowledge, competences and capabilities of a person, gained in formal, informal or non-formal learning. RPL is conducted with reference to outcomes in a formal qualification and/or levels on the NQF and, where relevant, particular workplace and social competences.

2.1.1 RPL for access into the Undergraduate Programme

Undergraduate students are deemed to be candidates registering for the Higher certificate in Nursing, Diploma in Nursing and the Bachelor's degree in nursing. Undergraduate students can be persons with a former qualification registered with the SANC or a candidate with a relevant matric/Senior Certificate only. These admissions are governed in terms of HEC, SANC and NQF criteria.

2.1.2 RPL for access into the Postgraduate (PGDIP) programmes

Post Graduate students are deemed to be Registered Professional Nurse with SANC, a General Nurse with midwifery qualification for two years (at least two years` experience post registration as a Professional Nurse of General Nurse and Midwife including community service). Prospective candidates from the R425 Diploma programmes which was set on an NQF level 6, will have to apply for RPL for entry into the Post graduate courses. These candidates will be allowed to enroll for the research component of the R174 Bachelor's Degree, this consists of Basic Nursing Research methods to the value of 10 credits, research project Midwifery of 20 credits. Upon successful completion of the research Component consisting out of 30 credits and the submission of an RPL portfolio of previous experience gained, will allow for access into the programme.

Additional learning assumed to be in place for entry into these programmes also includes:

- Proven proficiency in written and spoken English
- Computer Literacy
- Bio natural sciences
- Psycho-social sciences
- Legal, ethical and professional practice
- Biotechnology
- Competency in BLS

2.1.3 RPL for Credit transfers

- a) Credit Transfer learners/students will receive a maximum of 50% of the prescribed percentage of the completed qualification,
- b) Prospective postgraduate students must complete the Postgraduate RPL application form.
- c) A separate portfolio of evidence should provide details of experience relevant to the application.
- d) Details of industry-aligned short courses that may have been completed should be provided as should any formal subjects/qualifications completed at tertiary level institutions.

2.2 Formal learning

Formal learning is that which takes place in a formal institution such as an, HEI or NEI within a set curriculum. In South African higher education, it is learning that takes place in an accredited higher education institution within an accredited learning programme.

2.3 Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning is that which occurs as an organized educational activity outside the formal education system but intended to serve identifiable objectives or learning outcomes. In the context of the South African NQF, it is learning that has not been formally assessed against the criteria contained in a registered qualification or Unit Standard.

2.4 Informal learning

Informal learning is learning that takes place within activities that are not primarily organized or structured to achieve learning objectives or outcomes. This includes learning that happens through performing tasks in the workplace, home and community, through engaging in reading and with the mass media, through participation in informal discussions, and through taking constructive advice given by peers or superiors. Informal learning is usually non-sequential, non-course/module-based and not formally assessed.

3. PRINCIPLES WHICH THIS POLICY STRIVES TO UPHOLD

3.1 General Principles

- a) RPL is integral to the promotion of lifelong learning.
- b) RPL is part of a holistic approach to learning and the acknowledgement of the value of past learning and experience in a variety of formal, non-formal and informal contexts.
- c) RPL is a vehicle for redressing past inequities in teaching and education.
- d) RPL is a vehicle for broadening access to this institution for study purposes.
- e) WCCN is committed to using RPL to meet national needs regarding skills development.
- f) WCCN is committed to opening and creating learning pathways for individuals and groups, as described by the National Qualifications Framework.
- g) WCCN is committed to the principles of increasing the mobility of students and the portability of learning achievements.
- h) RPL should be subject to and part of sound assessment practices.
- i) The RPL process and the treatment of applicants should be free of any discriminatory practices.

Specific Principles of Implementation

- j) All students and staff must be offered the opportunity to gain recognition for prior learning.
- k) Competences assessed through RPL should be current in relation to programmes and qualifications at WCCN. If necessary, agreement from professional bodies to be obtained before an academic department embarks on a RPL plan and the implementation thereof.
- l) All qualification specifications and learning programmes must include appropriate mechanisms for dealing with RPL.
- m) There must be appropriate mechanisms in place in each Department to deal with RPL.
Ten-year rule
- n) If a prospective student requests to continue with his/her studies or be registered with the WCCN after five (5) to 10 years have passed since the initial commencement of a training programme, this application is regarded as an RPL application. The aim of the RPL assessment will be to determine whether the person's knowledge gained in the workplace is relevant, sufficient and current in relation to the current qualification which the person studied before and now wants to continue with. The assessment is done on the currency of the knowledge in the field of discipline. The RPL Assessment should be done before the individual is allowed to register.
- o) Advanced standing can only be granted for 50% of any programme (Certain stipulations should be determined e.g. Institution of previous qualification and period between studies see q above). The remainder 50% has to be completed by the individual as a normal student. The RPL assessment is done before the individual is allowed to register.
- p) Other than in exceptional cases (in which a rationale would have to be provided to the Senate Executive Committee) at WCCN the award of a whole qualification cannot be

gained through RPL. Rather than award a whole qualification through RPL, WCCN in most cases will award the status of a qualification in order to provide access to a qualification on the next level of the NQF. E.g. Rather than award a National Diploma based on RPL, WCCN will grant a candidate who provides evidence of the requisite competence, access to a Bachelor's Degree using subjects for non-degree purposes.

- q) The number of students allowed to access a programme may not exceed 10% of the number of students per programme per academic year.

4. SUPPORTING ELEMENTS

The procedures for RPL should include the following elements:

4.1 RPL Application

- a) The potential RPL applicant applies to study at WCCN through completing the standard application form and ticking the RPL box and paying the usual application fee. A student number is generated by the student management system for the candidate. This signals the start of the formal RPL process.
- b) The application form is forwarded from Admissions to the designated staff member in the Department or the RPL Unit. The application is uploaded onto the RPL tracking system. Once uploaded the applications form is forwarded to the relevant academic department.
- c) The application form should have attached additional information from the RPL applicant indicating the reason for the application and the type of RPL requested.

4.2 Personnel

4.2.1 RPL Administrators

- a) Assign an administrative person as an RPL Administrator. This should form part of the person's Key Performance Areas (KPA's).
- b) The RPL administrator will upload the RPL application onto the RPL tracking system.
- c) The RPL administrative staff member will monitor the progress made on the application through the relevant mechanisms within WCCN to ensure that the application is processed in good time.

4.2.2 RPL Facilitator

- a) A Designated academic member of staff will be tasked with the facilitation of RPL. The RPL facilitation should be part of the individual's Key Performance Areas (KPA's)
- b) The RPL Facilitator will provide information to applicants regarding learning programmes and the RPL opportunities related to these. This person will also liaise with the RPL Advisor and RPL Administrator at WCCN.
- c) Subjects such as Mathematics and Math Literacy will be presented by an externally appointed RPL lecturer with the relevant qualification.

4.2.3 RPL Advisor

- a) Assign an RPL advisor that is a member of the WCCN Teaching and Learning committee. This person is a lecturer and has an academic appointment and responsibility is specified in the post's Key Performance Areas (KPA's).

- b) This individual advises academic and administrative staff on RPL matters. In addition, in consultation with academic department, the person can advise RPL applications on RPL. Detail on this advisor role is spelled out in points below.

5. IMPLIMENTATION OF RPL PROCESS

5.1 Develop RPL annual plan:

- a) The RPL Advisor, facilitator and administrator annually in March prepare a plan for the ensuing academic year and submit the plan and budget to the WCCN Director.
- b) The Senate teaching and learning committee consider the plan.
- c) After finalization the plan is uploaded onto the WCCN website and availed in hard copy for interested prospective students.
- d) Fees payable must be available on the website and brochures.
- e) Application deadline is 30 June.

5.2 Screening of RPL Applicants

- a) The applicant completes the on-line screening mechanism and attaches it to his/her applications form.
- b) The completed screening mechanism is reviewed by the RPL Facilitator. RPL administrator is notified of the outcome of the initial screening.
- c) If the application is not deemed to be a feasible RPL application the applicant is notified in writing and advised on alternative options by the RPL Administrator.
- d) If the application is deemed to be a feasible RPL, the applicant is notified by the RPL Facilitator about the RPL assessment that will take place.
- e) Completion date 20 November of each year.

5.3 RPL Assessment plan and collection of evidence

- a) The RPL facilitator submits the assessment plan to Teaching and Learning Committee.
- b) The Teaching and Learning Committee approves the assessment plan or refers it back for amendments.
- c) The fee is paid by the candidate once the person and the academic department have agreed to go ahead with the RPL assessment. Details of the payments are issued by the RPL administrator.
- d) Candidates who are given permission to continue with the RPL process are given the assessment plan. Support to the candidate is provided:
- e) The RPL facilitator and the candidate clarify the purpose of RPL in the case at hand: e.g. one or more of the following: access to a programme of study; credit transfer; exemption from components of a qualification or learning programme.
- f) The RPL facilitator provides guidance concerning the programme/s, so that the candidate can make an informed decision regarding a suitable RPL process and/or programme of study.
- g) The candidate demonstrates an understanding of the target field of study and potential evidence to substantiate the application for RPL.
- h) The RPL facilitator clarifies whether the candidate intends to study full-time or part-time, and if the latter, whether this can be accommodated by the department.

- i) The facilitator provides the candidate with relevant guidance in terms of evidence collection/ production in relation to the assessment plan. This may include enrolling the applicant on a portfolio development course where appropriate.
- j) The evidence collection process could include portfolio development, challenge tests/exams, interviews, demonstrations, written tasks, testimonials, etc.

5.4 Assessment and moderation

- a) The RPL Facilitator assesses the evidence against the level descriptors and identified subject/module/programme outcomes'
- b) The assessment report is written and submitted for moderation.
- c) Assessment of an RPL application for access, advanced standing, exemption or credits as part of a qualification should be internally moderated by Teaching and Learning Committee, or a panel set up for this purpose. The relevant subject/level specialists should be consulted.
- d) The RPL Advisor submits a summary moderation and assessment report to WCCN SENATE for approval together with the assessor/moderator report and all evidence submitted (In hard or soft copy).
- e) Senate Teaching and Learning committee will either formally approve the RPL result and or refers the report back with a rationale for doing so. The report will be corrected and resubmit. If indicated.
- f) This part of the programme should be completed by September of each year.

5.5. Notification of the RPL results

- a) The RPL administrator, upon being notified of the RPL result by the RPL Advisor, informs the candidate in writing of the result of the application.
- b) If the RPL application is unsuccessful, the RPL administrator notifies the candidate in writing of the result of the application.
- c) Time frames: Departments should ensure that the process is completed as expeditiously as possible. Given the nature of the RPL process it is understood that some cases may take longer than others.
- d) A period of 3- 4 months should be the norm. Students should be informed by November of each year.

5.6 Appeals

- a) Candidates may appeal against relevant features of the RPL assessment and moderation process. Appeals policy will apply.
- b) Candidates may also appeal against other aspects of the RPL service provided, e.g. discriminatory treatment, unreasonable delays.
- c) The appeal process should be concluded in November of each year.

5.7. Registration

- a) The successful candidate registers for the approved learning programme and qualification.
- b) If access is granted it will be valid for two years. If the RPL applicant does not register within two years, the RPL decision can be renewed through a WCCN SENATE decision as described above. However, if the individual does not register again, the RPL decision

- lapses after one year. If the person still wants to gain entry into the WCCN, he/she will have to re-apply for RPL.
- c) The RPL decision regarding advanced standing is recorded at least within two months after registration on the student's academic record. In the case of advanced standing, these credits are subject to the 10-year rule as described above.
- d) Care should be taken to ensure that information about RPL results is not recorded in such a way as to lead to discrimination against RPL students by other students, staff or future employers.

6. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND/OR POLICY, CODES OF PRACTICE, PROFESSIONAL AUTHORITIES:

- National Skills Development Strategy.
- SAQA Act 58 of 1995.
- SAQA RPL Policy.
- The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008)
- National Senior Certificate – a qualification at level 4 on the NQF, in Government Gazette, Vol. 481, No. 27819 (July 2005),
- Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Senior Certificate (NSC), in Government Gazette, Vol. 482, No. 27961 (August 2005). (Amended in July 2008)
- National Certificate Vocational (NCV) NQF 4 (November 2009)
- HEQC Criteria for Institutional Audits and Programme Accreditation.
- Relevant policies of South African Nursing Council.
- SANC RPL POLICY

7. RELEVANT INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES/ DOCUMENTS/MANUALS/ HANDBOOKS

- Vision, Mission & Strategic Plan of WCCN
- Assessment Policy and associated procedures,
- Teaching & Learning Strategy,
- Assessment policy,
- Quality Policy,
- Curriculum development policy,
- WCCN Admission Requirements and Regulations.