

SARA Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an international practice that gives currency and recognition to a person's previous learning, regardless of how and where that learning was acquired. In essence, it allows skills and knowledge acquired outside of formal educational institutions to be formally recognised. SAQA intends for South Africa to address its need for a more skilled, flexible and productive workforce through RPL.
- 1.2 RPL in South Africa, unlike similar initiatives in other countries, has a very specific agenda. RPL is meant to support transformation of the education and training system of the country. This calls for an approach to the development of RPL policy and practices that explicitly addresses the visible and invisible barriers to learning and assessment. Such an approach must generate the commitment of all role players to remove these barriers and to build a visible, usable and credible system as an effective and creative vehicle for lifelong learning. (SAQA RPL policy (2002:11))
- 1.3 Recognising learning that takes place in both formal and informal environments may enable and improve access to employment, career opportunities and further formal education.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of SARA's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy is to assess previously acquired skills and knowledge of an applicant applying for one of SARA's Professional Designations (i.e. Reward and International Mobility).
- 2.2 To ensure that SARA members who are accredited in one of the Professional Designations uphold a level of knowledge associated with the accredited designation, SARA has developed a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) policy that sets the standards and requirements for continuous professional development, after accreditation.

3. Background

- 3.1 RPL forms a vital part of SARA's transformation agenda. The South African reward profession remains challenged as it has not made significant improvement with reference to equity and redress within the new democratic dispensation.
- 3.2 While the focus of the current transformation initiatives remains largely at increasing the intake of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds through our internship program, and appointment on our various committees, this is a slow process.
- 3.3 The reality of the South African reward and international mobility profession is that a significant number of practitioners from historically disadvantaged backgrounds actively practice their trade, with no opportunity to upgrade their professional standing

other than enrolling for full time studies. RPL affords these practitioners the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills in order to upgrade their professional status. In this regard RPL will improve turn-around time on transformation than the only other currently available alternative - that of full time studies.

- 3.4 It is emphasised that obtaining advanced professional status via RPL will be subject to rigorous assessment and evaluation so as to ensure that the knowledge, skills and professional competencies of such persons are on par with their counterparts who have qualified via the traditional academic route. In this regard, CPD, including registering for courses at recognised educational institutions, is vital to bridging possible knowledge gaps, while still in full time employment or practice.

4. Assessment

- 4.1 The fundamental philosophy on which the assessment is based is that reward and international mobility practitioners at all designation levels essentially share similar professional landscape and social responsibilities at different competencies. They are exposed to the same technological, environmental, legislative and socio-economic parameters and constraints, although arguably to different degrees depending on the complexity of the work and level at which they operate.
- 4.2 At the same time it should be emphasised that there is considerable overlap between the various designation levels, and that the competencies required can never be as neatly packaged as documentation might suggest. RPL recognises that over time as experience is gained, competencies are gained, which allows an applicant to apply for recognition and a higher level designation.
- 4.3 On the receipt of a detailed portfolio of evidence (POE), each RPL application will be assessed against the experience and criteria defined for the designation applied for.
- 4.4 Based on the assessment, further evidence may be requested.
- 4.5 In the event that specific criteria and/or competencies cannot be verified, these may be tested through oral, written and/or practical examination.

5. Appeals process

An unsuccessful applicant may lodge a thoroughly motivated appeal in writing to SARA who, in deliberation with the Appeals Committee, may:

- 5.1 Instruct the Accreditation Committee to consider additional evidence;
- 5.2 Invite the applicant for re-assessment and/or request additional supporting evidence;
or
- 5.3 Dismiss the appeal and advise the applicant on the available processes for 'upskilling'.

6. Policy Update

This policy will be reviewed annually, and updated from time to time as required.