


<b>ENGINEERING COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA</b> <i>Standards and Procedures System</i>			 <b>E C S A</b>
<b>Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL Policy)</b>			
<b>Status: Approved by Council</b>			
<b>Document : RPL Policy</b>	<b>Rev 3</b>	<b>18 May 2017</b>	

## 1. Background

- 1.1. Section 19 (2) (b) (iii) and (4) of the Engineering Professions Act 2000 (Act 46 of 2000) compels the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) to consider the submission of evidence of prior learning in engineering in its registration process taking into account “previous learning and experience of a learner, how so ever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and the acceptance for the purpose of qualification of that which meets those requirements.”
- 1.2 This policy must be read in conjunction with:-
- 1.2.1 The Council for the Built Environment (CBE) Act, 2000 (Act № 43 of 2000) and while comprising of ECSA’s individual policies must be aligned to the CBE framework.
- 1.2.2 The South African Qualifications Authority’ (SAQA), National Policy for the Implementation of The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) 2013, and served as a guide for ECSA in development of its own RPL implementation policies inclusive of ECSA’s professional requirements.
- 1.2.3 The Council on Higher Education (CHE) policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in higher education (August 2016).
- 1.2.4 National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (№ 67 of 2008); Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Coordination Policy (February 2016).
- 1.2.5 SAQA’s Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the NQF Act, Act 67 Of 2008.

## 2. Purpose

This policy framework for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides for the consolidation of existing ECSA RPL policies and practices coupled to the national policies as tabulated in 2.0 below.

## 3. Definitions

While ECSA defines RPL as in 1.1 above it is complimented by both the SAQA and CHE definitions as tabulated below:

- 3.1 The SAQA National RPL Policy defines RPL as:- “ The RPL process is a multi-dimensional one. It is a process through which non-formal learning and informal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirement for

credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system, or workplace. RPL processes can include guidance and counselling, and extended preparation for assessment.” (SAQA 2013)

3.2 The CHE policies on RPL defines as “Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and vigorously assessed and moderated for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.” (CHE 2016)

3.3 All three Policies make reference to not only previous learning but also to the training skills and experience gained.

#### **4. Problem Statement**

4.1 The implementation of RPL in general, seeks to facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and experience in arriving at a defined competency level in the workplace. It is however restricted by the different teaching and learning methodology between technology and engineering science programs.

##### *4.2 Specified Categories*

4.2.1 The educational base qualification for the Specified Category of engineering practitioners is at NQF level 5 and a range of qualifications and assessment criteria exist to meet this requirement.

##### *4.3 Professional Engineering Technicians and Technologists*

4.3.1 The educational base qualifications for the registration of Professional Technicians and Technologists, is assessed not only through the benchmark qualifications presently provided through the suite of NATED 151 qualifications and the new HEQSF suite of educational programmes but also through an engineering base qualification starting at least at NQF level 4 combined with Initial Professional Development (IPD) courses and a time period of working in engineering and responsible engineering at the designated NQF level and the International Engineering Alliance (IEA) and Level Descriptors of Well Defined Activities and Broadly defined activities referred to in the Registration Documents, R-02-PN and R-02-PT respectively.

##### *4.4 Professional Certificated Engineers*

4.4.1 The educational base qualifications for appointment as a Certificated Engineer is set at engineering qualifications level 5,6,7 or 8 and requires varying periods of in service training and experience.

4.4.2 Registration as a Professional Certificated Engineer in terms of document R-02-PCE requires the applicant to be educated, trained and experienced to carry out broadly defined work at level 7.

#### 4.5 *Professional Engineers*

- 4.5.1 Educational base qualification for registration as a Professional Engineer is the South African Accredited B Eng/BSc engineering degree and other suites of qualifications as indicated in ECSA educational policy E-17-P. The challenge is that to progress from any Technology Educational Programme to an Engineering Science Programme is extremely arduous due to the lack of mathematical and natural science fundamentals, engineering science fundamentals and the different teaching and learning methodology applied by Universities (Science) to that of the Universities of Technology.
- 4.5.2 Registration as a Professional Engineer is dependent on the applicant meeting the requirements stipulated in Document R-02-PE at the IEA level descriptors of Complex Activities, level 8.

### **5. Scope**

- 5.1 This policy frame takes into consideration those RPL policies practiced by institutes of learning, specifically those in compliance with the new Higher Education Sub Framework (HEQSF), skills development providers, workplaces, RPL practitioners and RPL candidates.

### **6. Objectives of The Policy Framework on Recognition of Prior Learning**

- 6.1. The objectives of the RPL policy are to:
  - 6.1.1 Meet the requirements of the act in so far as to give credence to those persons presenting evidence of prior learning in engineering for registration as a professional, a candidate or in a specified category and specified category candidate.
  - 6.1.2 Facilitate recognition of competency and registration status for those applicants who do not fall within the accepted benchmark routes to registration.
  - 6.1.3 Broaden the entry routes into the profession and in so doing reduces the risk of danger in the interest of health and safety.
  - 6.1.4 Be aligned to the CBE policy on RPL.
  - 6.1.5 Be in compliance, where applicable, with the SAQA National Policy for the Implementation of RPL.
  - 6.1.6 Be in compliance, where applicable, with the CHE policies on the RPL.

### **7. Principles for Recognition of Prior Learning**

- 7.1. The principles embedded in this policy on the assessment for RPL are as follows:
  - 7.1.1 The assessment must be credible, using various methods and instruments.
  - 7.1.2 The cost of RPL must be transparent and cost effective.
  - 7.1.3 Evidence must be appropriate.
  - 7.1.4 Assessment must be planned and designed on the basis of understanding the requirements of previously accepted unit standards, part and whole qualifications, SAQA level descriptions and credit ratings.
  - 7.1.5 Moderation and quality assurance of the assessment must be undertaken.
  - 7.1.6 The system, process, competency requirements and assessment of RPL must be simple and easily understood.
  - 7.1.7 The system must comply with the latest edition of the following requirements:-
    - 7.1.7.1 SAQA National Policy for the Implementation of RPL
    - 7.1.7.2 CHE policies on RPL
    - 7.1.7.3 CBE Framework on RPL
    - 7.1.7.4 NQF RPL Co-ordinating Policy

## 8. ECSA RPL Model

- 8.1 The ECSA model on RPL is embedded in the following ECSA approved policy documents.
- 8.1.1 Criteria and Processes for Recognition of Educational Qualifications for Professional Categories - E-17-P;
  - 8.1.2 Criteria and Processes for Recognition of Educational Qualifications for Specified Categories – E-17-SC;
  - 8.1.3 Assessment of Educational Achievement in Professional Categories – E-18-P;
  - 8.1.4 Policy on Registration of persons in Professional Categories – R-01-P;
  - 8.1.5 Policy on Registration of persons in a Specified Category – R-01-SC;
  - 8.1.6 Competency Standard for Registration as a Professional Engineer – R-02-PE;
  - 8.1.7 Competency Standard for Registration as a Professional Engineering Technologist - R-02-PT;
  - 8.1.8 Competency Standard for the Registration as a Professional Certificated Engineer – R-02-PCE;
  - 8.1.9 Competency Standard for the Registration as a Professional Engineering Technician – R-02-PN;
  - 8.1.10 Competency Standard for the Registration in a Specified Category – R-02-SC.
- 8.2 Each of these policies irrespective of whether they are referenced to professional categories or specified categories define four (4) methods, as depicted in document E-17-P, of meeting the educational requirements for registration either as a candidate, or registration as a professional or specified category practitioner.

In the first two methods, an applicant satisfies the education requirements if he/she:-

- (i) Holds an accredited qualification or acceptable combination of accredited qualifications prescribed for the category; or
- (ii) Holds a qualification or combination of qualifications recognised under an international academic agreement relevant to the category.

In the third and fourth methods an applicant must demonstrate an educational standing that is substantially equivalent to an accredited qualification by one or more of the following methods:-

- (iii) Holds a qualification or combination of qualifications that have been determined by case by case evaluation to satisfy criteria for substantial equivalence; or
- (iv) Presents a combination of evidence determined by council for that category that indicates an individual level of education achievement against criteria that is substantially equivalent to an accredited qualification.

Evidence may include:

- (a) Qualification(s) or credits towards qualifications not presented under (iii);
- (b) Completion of examinations or other forms of assessment set or prescribed by council; or
- (c) Portfolio(s) of evidence of work and other outputs presented for assessment or;
- (d) Other evidence of prior learning presented for assessment.

8.3 ECSA also places emphasis on the accumulation of a combination of qualifications and Initial Professional Development (IPD) credits, at the appropriate NQF level coupled to work place experience in recognising a qualification as substantially equivalent to meet the minimum educational requirements to register as a Engineering Practitioner or Candidate Engineering Practitioner.

8.3.1 Credits are awarded for knowledge and skills and not for experience alone.

8.4 Detailed requirements for the various methods of satisfying the educational requirements for registration are set out in the documents tabled in Clause 8.1.

## **9. Forms of RPL**

9.1 ECSA takes into consideration and recognises the two main forms of RPL as contained in SAQA's National Policy for the implementation of RPL which reflects the different purposes and different processes within which RPL takes place namely:-

9.1.1 RPL for access: To provide an alternative access route into a programme of learning for those who do not meet the formal entry requirements for admission. RPL for access applies to learning programmes offered by an accredited institution of further learning (including a post-school institution and an adult learning centre) or workplace-based training provider.

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

9.1.3 In both cases, RPL processes may take place at a diagnostic, formative or summative point, or in-curriculum to create opportunities for advanced standing or recognition in the workplace.

9.2 ECSA also takes into consideration and recognises SAQA's Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the purposes of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.

## **10. The Assessment Process**

10.1 The assessment process for both education achievement and registration of engineering and candidate engineering practitioners is contained in the ECSA documents tabulated in clause 8.1.

10.2 All possible avenues are sought and implemented to ensure that the assessment process embodies the attributes of assessment principles.

## **11. Quality assurance**

11.1 ECSA's RPL policy is quality assured through its structures of:

11.1.1 Education, Qualification and Evaluation systems and

11.1.2 Registration systems, of which the Operating Policy and Terms of Reference have been approved by the ECSA Council.

## **12. Appeal Process**

12.1 An appeal process is contained within the Act which allows:-


12.1.1 A grievance procedure in relation to registration and

- 12.1.2 An appeal procedure against certain decisions of council.
- 12.2 These processes have been enhanced by the introduction of a review system where applicants can request a re-evaluation of their initial engineering education evaluation.

**13. Review**

This RPL policy framework should be reviewed at least once in the term of the office of council.

**Revision History**

Version	Date	Revision Authorized by	Nature of revision
Rev1	1 Nov 2016	Dr TE Stidworthy	Compilation of new RPL Policy
Rev2	10 April 2017	PDSGC	Approval of Draft RPL Policy with comments from SAQA to be included in document
Rev3	17 April 2017	Dr TE Stidworthy	Incorporated SAQA comments in Draft RPL Policy
Rev 3	25 April 2017	PDSGC	Approval of final document with SAQA comments via round robin. No changes.
Rev 3	18 May 2017	Council	Approved
<b>ECSA CONTROLLED COPY</b>		<b>Executive: Policy Development and Standards Generation</b>	 <hr/> John Cato <b>2017-05-19</b> <hr/> Date

## List of Acronyms

<b>CHE</b>	<b>Council of Higher Learning</b>
<b>CBE</b>	<b>Council for the Built Environment (Act 43 of 2000)</b>
<b>ECSA</b>	<b>Engineering Council of South Africa (Act 46 of 2000)</b>
<b>HEQSF</b>	<b>Higher Educational Qualifications Sub-Framework</b>
<b>IEA</b>	<b>International Engineering Alliance</b>
<b>IPD</b>	<b>Initial Professional Development</b>
<b>Nated 151</b>	<b>National Education Policy 151</b>
<b>NQF</b>	<b>National Qualifications Framework (Act 67 of 2008)</b>
<b>RPL</b>	<b>Recognition of Prior Learning</b>
<b>SAQA</b>	<b>South African Qualifications Authority</b>