

# SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR PLANNERS

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The South African  
Council *for* Planners  
S A C P L A N

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## Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure

Competencies and Standards Project Phase 2

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## Task 4 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

### 1. Purpose

Prior Learning is learning which has taken place prior to admission to a planning programme or as a requirement towards registration. The learning can be academic or experience. The current definition encompasses both forms. It is therefore crucial for all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to introduce and maintain the practice of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) that supports the notion of lifelong learning and outcomes based education. SAQA has also published a Policy and criteria for the recognition of prior learning (Government Gazette No. 35747, 5 October 2012). There is existing provision within the Planning Profession Act to recognise other qualifications for the registration of an applicant as a candidate, technical or professional planner. Similarly there is acknowledgement that the Council can administer a competency assessment in terms of The Act which refers to registration as a Candidate, Technical and Professional Planner, after he or she “has passed a competency assessment determined by the Council”.

The purpose of this report is to develop a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and procedures

### 2. National guiding principles

**Definition:** The national understanding and context of RPL by SAQA (2013) is as follows:

- *The idea of RPL is aligned to main elements of South African national policy discourse since 1994: transformation; accreditation; lifelong learning; and the NQF.*
- *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 requirements 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.*
- *Assessment, an integral feature of all forms of RPL, does not exist in isolation from a range of other strategies that allow for different sources of knowledge and forms of learning to be compared and judged.*
- *RPL is multi-contextual. How it takes place differs from one context to another. RPL may be developed and implemented differently for the purposes of personal development, further learning and advancement in the workplace, and recognition within the three Sub-frameworks of the NQF.*
- *Furthermore, it may be conducted by a variety of methods using a combination of teaching-learning, mentoring and/or assessment approaches, as appropriate. The purposes and contexts determine the practices and outcomes of RPL in each case.*

**Application:** The underlying principles as formulated by SAQA include the following:

- *RPL may be carried out at any level of learning and at any NQF level.*
- *There are two main forms of RPL which reflect the different purposes and the different processes within which RPL takes place:*
  - *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.*
  - *RPL for credits: To provide for the awarding of credits for, or towards, a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF.*
  - *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.*

**Principles:** The following principles as formulated by SAQA are important elements in the RPL approach:

- *The focus is on what has been learned and not on the status of the institution, organisation or place where the learning was obtained.*
- *Credit is awarded for knowledge and skills acquired through experience and not for experience alone.*
- *Prior learning is made explicit through assessment and/or other methods that engage the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired.*
- *Candidate guidance and support, the preparation of evidence and the development of an appropriate combination of further teaching and learning, mentoring and assessment approaches are core to RPL practice.*

### 3. SACPLAN policy

- **Admission policies:**

- In addition to the national guiding principles on RPL the policy outlined in this section will apply to those individuals who wish to get admission to any Planning School for an accredited under-graduate or post-graduate degree programmes.
- This includes prospective learners who holds a foreign Higher Education Institution degree qualifications.
- In such cases the prospective learners qualifications will be referred to SAQA for assessment.
- The Planning School applied to for programme admission may also require from such an individual to write an competence examination.
- In the assessment process such an individual may be invited to a formal interview with the Management of the Planning School.

- Every higher education institution (University) has its own internal RPL Policy which will be applied in addition to the policy principles discussed in this SACPLAN Document.
  - There exists a close relationship between the National RPL Policy, the SACPLAN Guidelines and the internal policy of a Higher Education Institution accommodating a Planning School.
- **Application to SACPLAN for registration with a foreign qualification**
    - Any individual who wishes to register as a candidate, technical, or professional planner with SACPLAN who are not in possession of an accredited planning qualification will be required to have submit such qualifications to SAQA for assessment.
    - The outcome of such assessment will have to be submitted with certified copies of all such qualification to SACPLAN supported with all the filled out forms for Registration purposes.
    - A detailed work record in the format that SACPLAN will provide needs to be submitted with the Application for Registration.
    - SACPLAN may require that any such individual write an examination in order to assess the professional knowledge and experience on any related planning topic or issues.
    - SACPLAN may invite such an individual for an in depth interview in this assessment for registration process.
  - **Application to SACPLAN for registration based on RPL principles only**

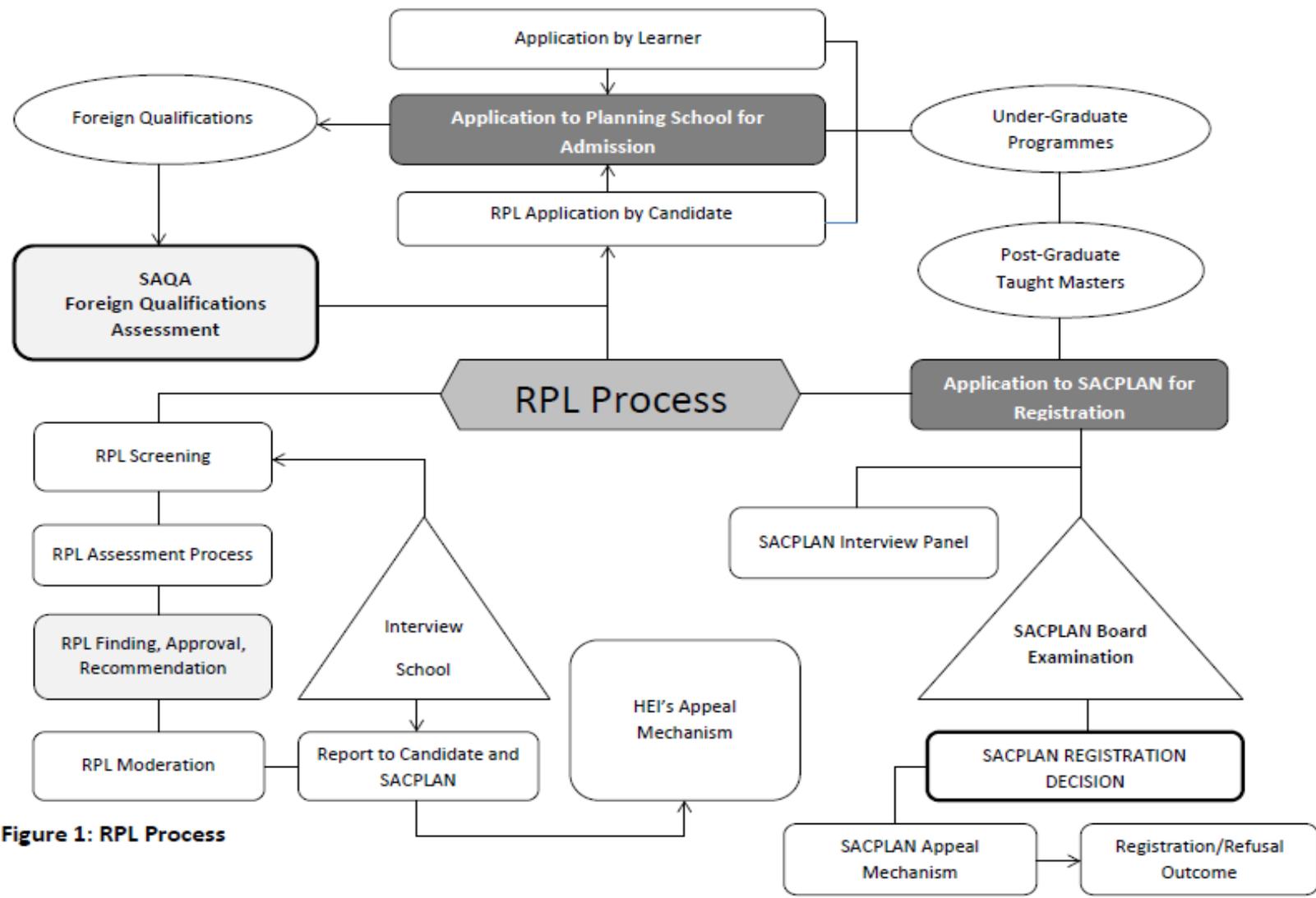
Figure 1 shows the recommended RPL Process for an individual who holds no formal degree qualification and who wish to register with SACPLAN. The process followed in addition to the RPL-assessment may include the following:

- Writing of a formal examination.
- Formal interview with a panel appointed by SACPLAN inclusive of Registered Planners and persons registered in related professions within the built environment.
  - The process as outlined above may be applied to any of the admission or registration processes as described above.

As it is the responsibility of accredited planning schools to ensure the graduation of competent students, the recognition of prior learning for academic or training purposes, this component should be retained within HEIs and managed by them, in

association with SACPLAN as described above. The abovementioned policy is being provided as to assist such Planning Schools and HEI's in applying RPL in context to the role and responsibilities of SACPLAN as the Registration and Controlling Body of the Profession.

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**Figure 1: RPL Process**

#### 4. Procedures for Registration with SACPLAN based on the RPL Route

In addition to the policy guidelines above, the following procedures and requirements will apply to registration with SACPLAN based on RPL considerations.

##### 4.1. Registration as a Planner or Professional Planner

In line with international experience it is recommended that that all applicants applying for registration through the RPL route should be admitted at the candidate level. There are two routes for RPL registration as shown in **Figure 2**.

- The first category are those applicants who have qualifications with a minimum of HEQF exit level 7 and above in an allied discipline, who are able to demonstrate more than 5 years full time experience in at least two of the categories of planning work required for registration and be able to provide a detailed report and an evidence-based portfolio of relevant planning work. In addition an RPL application form and a log should also be submitted on how and where they have gained both core and functional competencies. The applicant would be required to apply for registration as an Assistant planner for a *minimum period of 3 years* after which the candidate would be required to follow the normal processes for further registration.
- The second route is for those applicants who have a minimum exit level 5 (possibly supported by short courses and other related training), and who are able to demonstrate more than 10 years full-time experience at in at least two of the categories of planning work required for registration and be able to provide a detailed report and an evidence-based portfolio of relevant planning work. In addition an RPL application form and log should also be submitted on how and where they have gained both core and functional competencies. The applicant would be required to apply for registration as a candidate planner for a *minimum period of 4 years* after which the applicant would be required to follow the normal processes for further registration.

The submission should be evaluated by the Education and Technical Committee (or the Assessment and Examinations and Standards Board) against the formulated competencies for planners:

- i. If the applicant demonstrates sufficient compliance, he or she should be allowed to apply for registration as a candidate planner;
- ii. If the applicant demonstrates partial evidence of competency, he or she should be advised which additional courses or additional experience is needed in order to achieve registration as a candidate planner. This may require that the applicant successfully completes one or more of the modules contained in an accredited planning programme or within an accredited learning institution. Mechanisms for facilitating and managing the *ad hoc* completion of study modules may require further investigation;

- iii. If the portfolio submitted demonstrates little or no compliance, the application should be refused. In order to maintain a developmental approach the candidate may reapply a further 3 times at no less than 18 month intervals.

Once registered as an Assistant Planner, the process for registration as a Planner or Professional Planner must be followed, namely:

- 3 or 4 years (depending on the particular RPL route as indicated above) of practical training under the supervision of a Supervisor appointed by SACPLAN.
- SACPLAN ETC is to determine whether or not the applicant should be registered as a Planner or Professional planner based on the nature of the work which the applicant has demonstrated in their portfolio, examination and log;
- Completion of the Board examination and assessment.

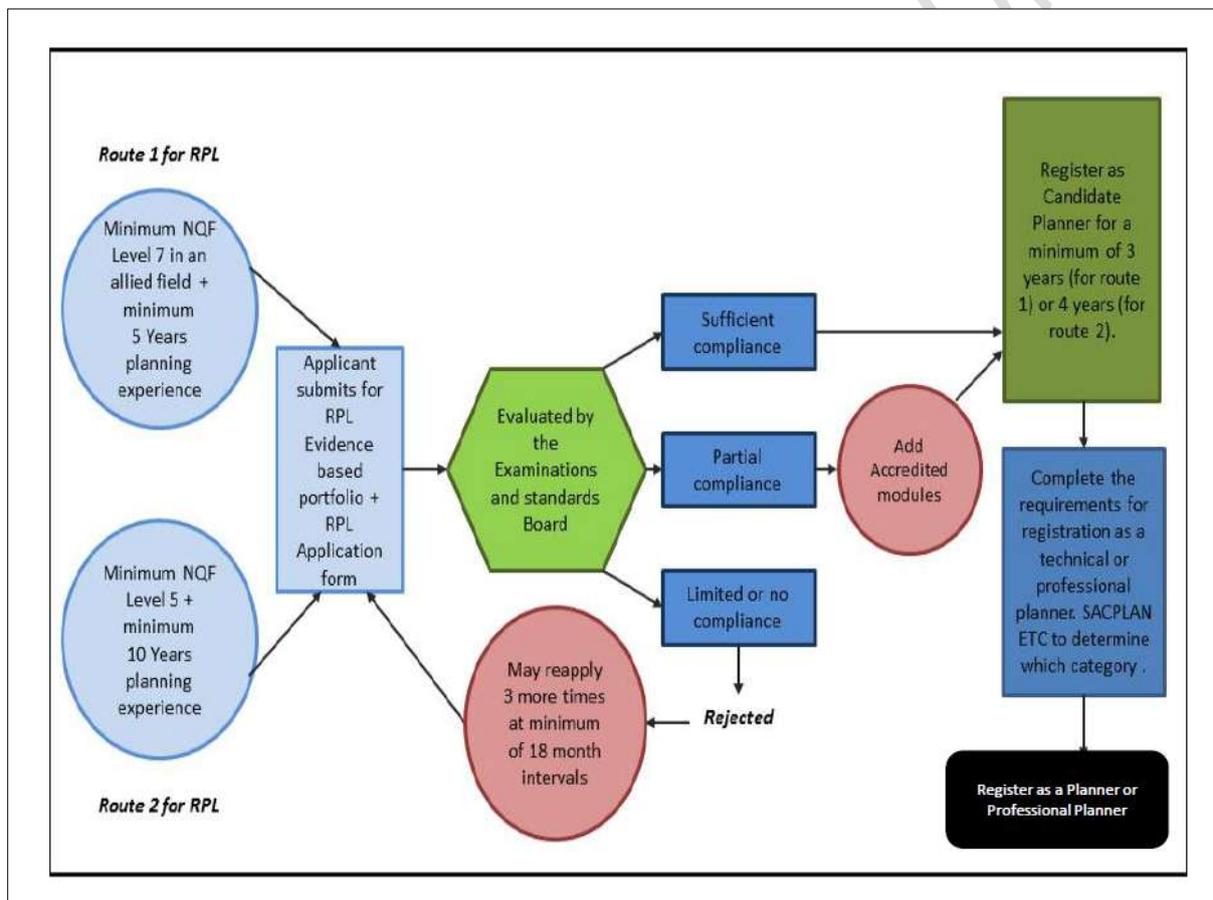


Figure 2: Routes and process for RPL registration by SACPLAN

## 5. Implementation plan (including transition arrangements)

It is recommended that, as an interim measure, SACPLAN's Education and Training Committee be responsible for the management of RPL until such time as the Assessment and Examinations

Board is established. This is preferable to leaving HEIs manage the process of preparing applicants for the SACPLAN accreditation process as the HEIs in South Africa differ in focus and do not all have equal institutional capacity to carry out this task.

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