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1. PREAMBLE

SAQA defines recognition of prior learning as “giving credit to what the learner already knows and can do regardless of whether this learning was achieved formally, informally or non-formally.” and that “ there is no fundamental difference in the assessment of the informally acquired skills and knowledge and those gained formally.”

2. INTRODUCTION

The Cape Town College of Fashion Design is dedicated to recognising prior learning within a framework of quality assurance. RPL is a key fundamental of the NQF and, particularly in as far as accelerated learning to ensure the redress of past inequalities. The College has adopted the principles formulated by SAQA which include the policy that there should be no repetition of learning outcomes achieved through formal, non-formal and informal learning, for example:

- Formal education and training programmes
- Formal and informal on-the-job education and training programmes
- Experiential learning (work experience)
- In-house education and training

Where appropriate, such learning should be recognised and credited. The fundamental difference between assessment of RPL and that of current learning is that previous learning is formally recognised and accepted as learning. The student is therefore not required to undergo more of the same learning and through assessment the previous learning is given credit and the credit is recorded and reported.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the RPL policy and procedure is to widen student access, to recognise formal and/ or informal training and to allow advanced placement.

3. VISION

Within the vision of the Cape Town College of Fashion Design is the requirement to increase the accessibility of higher education to the public. The College is dedicated to recognising prior learning within the framework of quality assurance, adopting the principles of SAQA, which include the policy that there should be no repetition of learning outcomes achieved through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

4. MISSION

The implementation and management of RPL at the Cape Town College of Fashion Design will embrace the values and strategic objectives as stated in the mission statement of the College.

5. DEFINITION

Recognition of Prior Learning is the process of assessing and accrediting the acquired knowledge and /or capabilities of a person gained formal, non-formal or informal learning against a set of outcomes in a form course of study or against a set of workplace or social competencies.

6. OBJECTIVES

The Cape Town College of Fashion Design acknowledges the following important objectives of RPL:

6.1. STUDENT PLACEMENT

To determine by means of assessment, an appropriate level of access to learning or teaching programme for an individual.

6.2. ACCELERATED STATUS

To grant an individual access to a learning programme at an NQF level that is higher than a qualification already obtained, awarding credits for a part of a learning programme for which an individual is registered on a basis of RPL.

7. PRINCIPLES

The Cape Town College of Fashion Design endorses the following principles:

- Legitimate, consistent and transparent RPL articulation processes
- Fairness and objectivity for all applicants
- Validity and reliability of assessment instruments and procedures
- The assessment of learning for the purpose of RPL must always adhere to the Assessment Policy of the College.
- The programmes offerings may be achieved in part or in whole through the process of Recognition of Prior Learning.

8. PROCEDURES FOR RPL

- The RPL process is administered by the Head of Administration who is the Acting RPL Facilitator. This process is overseen by the Academic Head.
- The RPL Facilitator is responsible for the verification the validation of the provided RPL application information and identification of RPL possibilities.
- The identification process is clearly communicated to an applicant.
- The applicant is responsible for providing all required evidence.

The following procedure must be completed by all RPL applicants.

<p>Step 1: Interview/ discussion</p>	<p>The applicant meets with the RPL facilitator to gain information regarding the requirements for successful RPL assessment.</p> <p>The RPL facilitator will explain how the evidence should be gathered and presented and how to fill out the RPL application form.</p> <p>If the applicant is not available for an interview, communication can occur via email or telephone.</p>
<p>Step 2: Identification process</p>	<p>Applicants must submit an RPL application form.</p> <p>The RPL facilitator is responsible for the verification and the validation of the provided RPL application information and identification of RPL possibilities after the RPL applicant has completed and submitted all necessary administrative documentation.</p> <p>The learner will receive a list of criteria for which the learner has to provide evidence to illustrate their competency in the module outcomes for which they want to receive recognition of prior learning of.</p>
<p>Step 3: Portfolio Submission</p>	<p>When the applicant feels satisfied that s/he has fulfilled all the required criteria s/he may submit the portfolio to the RPL facilitator.</p>
<p>Step 4: Portfolio assessment</p>	<p>The portfolio is assessed by the Academic Head and the relevant facilitator with the specialist subject area knowledge. The portfolio is moderated by the Quality Assurance Committee. The assessment and moderation process may take up to 2 weeks to complete.</p>
<p>Step 5: Additional information</p>	<p>Should the evidence provided by the applicant, demonstrate the required competencies, the applicant will be given the opportunity to submit additional evidence.</p>

Step 6: Assessment Feedback	The applicant will receive a detailed assessment sheet reflecting on provided evidence as feedback.
Step 7: Appeal Process	Should the applicant wish to appeal the assessment decision s/he must follow the learner appeal procedure.

9. RPL ASSESSMENT

The RPL assessment procedure is conducted as follows:

- The process of assessing and accrediting prior learning must be carefully balanced between academic assessment and student support.
- Prior learning must be assessed against the requirements of formal training programmes in accordance with National criteria and standards.
- Assessment of an individual’s prior learning must be assessed by an assessment panel of academic specialists.
- The assessment of an RPL portfolio will follow the policies and principals outlined in the college’s assessment policy.
- Once an RPL student has been declared competent and ready to enter formal training at a certain level, reasonable student support will be available to enable him/her to bridge the gap between non-formal and formal learning

10. EVIDENCE FOR RPL

10.1. CRITERIA FOR EVIDENCE

Evidence for recognising prior learning can come from a variety of sources. Regardless, of the source of evidence, the assessment should be checked for the following:

- Validity – Does the evidence relate to the specific outcomes to be assessed?
- Authenticity – Can the evidence be attributed to the student?
- Currency – Is the evidence related to current competence?
- Sufficiency – Is there enough evidence to meet all the criteria needed to be certified competent?

The student will have to produce evidence of their ability to perform the specified outcomes at a particular level.

11.2. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

There are three main types of evidence:

11.2.1. DIRECT EVIDENCE

This is actual evidence produced by the student. This is the most valid type of evidence. Direct evidence easily establishes authenticity. This should be the assessor's primary source of evidence. There are many examples of direct evidence and the ways in which it can be collected which include the following:

- Observation of a task
- Questioning the student about the task
- Written evidence that the student is able to undertake the task in terms of previous work experience

Sometimes it may be necessary to corroborate direct evidence. For example, observing whether the student is competent in the task for which RPL is sought.

11.2.2. INDIRECT EVIDENCE

This is evidence produced by the student from another source, for example, speaking to the student's previous employer about the work of the student at his previous place of employment (see historical evidence). It may be in the form of descriptions of performance from a third party rather than the performance itself. Sources of indirect evidence include the following:

- Verification of completed work
- Performance appraisals
- Training records
- Testimonials
- Work-based learning
- In-company short courses
- Reviews and commendations
- Certificates and qualifications

11.2.3. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

This evidence provides the assessor with information on what the student was capable of doing in the past. This type of evidence is the least valid because it does not necessarily assess current performance. It may therefore require additional evidence for corroboration

11.3. COLLECTING EVIDENCE

There is no time frame or limit for collecting evidence for RPL. Supervisory competence may require a portfolio of evidence which may take several months to collect where Operational competence may require a portfolio of evidence which may only take a few weeks to compile.

11.4. EVIDENCE PORTFOLIO

A portfolio is a collection of different types of evidence which relates to the work being assessed. They may include evidence from the student's day to day work, from previous work situations and other experiences and pursuits. It is important that the evidence collected is sufficient and about current competence. The student and assessor should plan the portfolio jointly. The student is however responsible for the collection of most of the evidence and the compilation of the portfolio. Ideally, the portfolio would consist of a variety of evidence to support the claim for RPL. These could include, but is not limited to:

- Observation of the task for which RPL is required
- Performance appraisal
- Questioning the student about the task
- Verification of completed work
- Training records
- Testimonials
- Work-based learning
- In-company short courses
- Workshops attended
- Reviews and commendations
- Interviews
- Projects undertaken

Obviously it is not possible to provide evidence in terms of all of the above variables without making the process cumbersome so the key is to produce evidence of their ability to perform at the required level of competence as specified in the claim for RPL. As far as possible, the evidence should be concise and direct. It is not the quantity but rather the quality of evidence that will weigh in favour of the student.

12. RPL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

The portfolio of evidence must, as a minimum, contain the following:

- Proof of work experience
- Certified copy of affidavit containing company letterhead
- Duration of employment
- Statement of job description
- Employer signature
- Proof of study
- Academic achievements
- References

13. REFERENCES

- Council on Higher Education HEQC 2004 Criteria for Institutional Audits
- CTFL – RPL – A strategy for providers
- Style Design College RPL Policy
- AFM RPL Policy