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1. PURPOSE

CTCFD - Cape Town College of Fashion Design (henceforth referred to as The Institution) and the qualifications that they offer: The Higher Certificate in Fashion Design, Diploma in Fashion Design, Advanced Diploma in Fashion Design, and Bachelor of Fashion Design (henceforth referred to as The Qualifications) all offer Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) opportunities. This RPL Outline Policy gives the reader a broad perspective of The Institution's RPL policy and is intended as a supportive document to underpin the approach outlined in The Institution's RPL Strategy Policy.

The purpose of the policy on RPL is to develop and facilitate the implementation of RPL across the higher education sector and should be based on the principles of equity, access, inclusivity and redress of past unfair discrimination with regard to educational opportunities. The policy provides direction and guidelines for a dynamic and evolving system of RPL that will promote lifelong learning, while at the same time protect the quality and standards of qualifications and higher education institutions.

2. OVERVIEW OF RPL POLICY

RPL is rooted within the context of lifelong learning and the need to redress inequities of the past as it provides alternative routes of access to higher education. It is the process through which non-formal and/or informal learning are measured, evaluated and translated into their perceived formal equivalents for recognition across different contexts. Its intended outcome is the recognition of such prior learning for the purposes of alternative access and admission to higher education learning programmes, or for advancement within qualification programmes.

- RPL refers to the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and rigorously assessed and moderated for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.
- RPL may be used to grant access to The Institution's qualification programmes, or advanced standing/exemption from modules or courses constitutive of the qualifications.
- Exemption from modules does not translate to credits being awarded for those modules. No credits should therefore be awarded for the modules that a student is exempted from doing on the basis of RPL.
- A student who, on the basis of RPL, is granted exemption from doing some modules in the qualification programmes will complete the qualification with a total number of credits that is less than the normally required number of credits for the qualification in question. RPL creates such an exception, and the student concerned should not be compelled to do more modules or courses to make up for the difference in the total number of credits.
- Full qualifications on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) cannot be awarded solely on the basis of RPL. Similarly, exemption based on RPL should be limited to not more than 50% of the modules of the qualification programmes in question. This means that no student should be exempted from more than 50% of the modules required for the qualification.
- Not more than 10% of a cohort of students in a qualification should be admitted through an RPL process.

- Quality assurance processes that address the specificities of the RPL process (including applications, assessment, and reporting and management systems) are implemented; and administrative and support systems, both prior and subsequent to RPL assessment, must be in place.

3. PRINCIPLES OF RPL

The following principles seek to create a foundation for the application of the RPL within higher education:

- RPL seeks to achieve inclusion and to overcome a variety of barriers to access and success in higher education. RPL should be premised on overcoming possible barriers to admission to, or registration for higher education studies for those people who lack the formal prerequisites.
- RPL is more than a process of assessment: rather, it is a specialised pedagogical process that also includes “translation” of informal and non-formal bodies of knowledge into their formal and structured equivalents based on specified competencies. RPL will require close consideration of the associated epistemologies and specifically of the differentiation between experiential and academic knowledge, and hence of the areas and levels to which RPL can appropriately be applied. It also requires clear understanding of the possible contribution of such informal and/or non-formal knowledge to each particular qualification type in higher education.
- The implementation of RPL is context-specific, in terms of institution, discipline, programme and level.

4. APPLICATION OF RPL

The following policy statements seek to guide the application for the RPL within higher education:

- RPL, as defined nationally by SAQA, applies to informal or non-formal learning only. Learning resulting from formal routes will normally be recognised via Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), but in cases where CAT is found not to be applicable, the RPL route may be explored.
- The Institution has determined the criteria for the operational implementation of RPL within the guidelines of its admission policies. In the interest of transparency, The Institution has clearly stipulated the requirements that must be satisfied for admission through RPL, and these requirements can be viewed in The Institution’s RPL Strategy Policy accessible from the administrator.
- RPL may be used to grant access to, or exemption from modules that contribute towards a qualification. The Institution may recognise forms of prior learning as equivalent to the prescribed formal minimum admission requirements, and may recognise other forms of prior learning for granting advanced standing through exemption from modules at lower levels of the qualification programme. In higher education, exemption from modules does not translate to credits being awarded for those modules.
- In RPL processes designed to grant access, an RPL application is evaluated against the entry requirements of the qualification in question. Applicants seeking access to The Institution who

do not hold a National Senior Certificate (NSC) may be considered for the RPL route, but will only be admitted at The Institution's discretion in accordance with The Institution's RPL Policies. An RPL assessment process should be used to evaluate the knowledge of applicants who do not hold a NSC or an equivalent qualification.

- Full qualifications are not awarded solely on the basis of RPL, and similarly RPL cannot be used to grant an individual the exemption from more than 50% of the modules required for a qualification. This policy prescript helps prevent the possibility of having the same set of prior knowledge being used for obtaining more than one qualification. It also assists in ensuring that an applicant refreshes his or her prior knowledge with new, cutting-edge content, theories and concepts in the chosen field of study, before obtaining a qualification. Also, it is in line with the regulation that a person must obtain 50% of a qualification at the institution that is going to award the certificate for the qualification.
- Since RPL does not lead to credits being awarded against modules that one is exempted from, it follows that if a student is granted exemption from one or more modules that lead to the qualification, that particular student will complete the qualification in question with a total number of credit points that are less than the normally required number of credits for the qualification. The academic record of that student will reflect 'exempted' against the modules that she or he was exempted from; while credits will be reflected against the modules that she or he did, got assessed for and achieved the required scores.
- Applicants seeking access to The Institution's Advanced Diploma qualification who do not hold an undergraduate degree in the field of Fashion Design may be admitted by RPL if they are able to satisfy the requisite RPL criteria. Such applicants may be given advanced standing but without the award of the primary qualification(s). The assessment criteria for advanced standing is clearly stipulated in The Institution's Assessment Policy. Not more than 10% of a cohort of students in a qualification will be admitted through an RPL process. This is a programme accreditation requirement. However, under exceptional circumstances, motivations to exceed this quota will be considered by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as part of its accreditation processes.
- Assessment criteria for RPL does not simply replicate those for mainstream study, but should seek to accommodate the knowledge and skills gained in practices outside the higher education institution in terms of their value for the envisaged course of study. Due consideration will be given to the fact, in some cases, that prior knowledge and skills would have been acquired, and would only be more effectively expressed, in languages that are not the media of teaching and learning at a particular institution.
- Assessment will be undertaken within the academic realm of The Institution and not by the Administration Department, as the disciplinary expertise of academic staff plays a crucial role in assessing the learning achieved by RPL.
- The Institution's staff members engaged in RPL implementation are thoroughly informed of the processes and issues involved, and are aware of the barriers commonly experienced by adult learners seeking to enter higher education.
- Administrative and support systems, both prior and subsequent to RPL, must be in place. Rules and regulations which inform, influence or govern decisions taken in respect to articulation

are available in The Institution's RPL Strategy Policy. The rules and regulations include making a fair and transparent appeals process available to applicants who might not feel satisfied with the initial outcome of their applications for RPL.

- Certificates awarded signifying successful completion of a qualification will not reflect that a candidate has gained access to or been awarded advanced standing through an RPL process. However, as stated above, the academic transcripts of those who were exempted from some modules will reflect exemptions achieved through the RPL process, but with no credit points attached.
- The Institution will ensure that quality assurance processes that address the specificities of the RPL process (including applications, assessment, and reporting and management systems) are implemented.
- Provision is made by The Institution for regular quality review of RPL policies and practices. When reviewing the RPL policies, The Institution will seek to address issues relating to resourcing and the consistent and fair administration of institutional RPL practices, staff capacity, resources of time and logistical challenges, and data management practices.

5. REFERENCES

Council on Higher Education, 2016. *Recognition of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in higher education*. CHE: Pretoria.